

Disability NOW

£1.60 JANUARY 1997

The award
winning
newspaper
for everyone
with an interest
in disability

PROFILE

Costs teacher on a
power trip

10

HOLIDAYS

A chilling tale of
Siberian sights

21

HEALTH

Who is the man
behind the mask?

23

ARTS

Creative project
gives artistic control

24

CLASSIFIEDS

Jobs, friends,
bargains, breaks

29

Acting up against law

Europe's first anti-discrimination act for disabled people, which came into force on 2 December, has had a mixed response from the people it is supposed to help.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), it is now illegal for employers with 20 or more staff and providers of goods and services to discriminate unjustifiably against disabled people. Schools and further and higher education colleges must publish information about their arrangements for disabled pupils.

Further regulations covering buildings, public transport and procedures will be phased in over the next nine years.

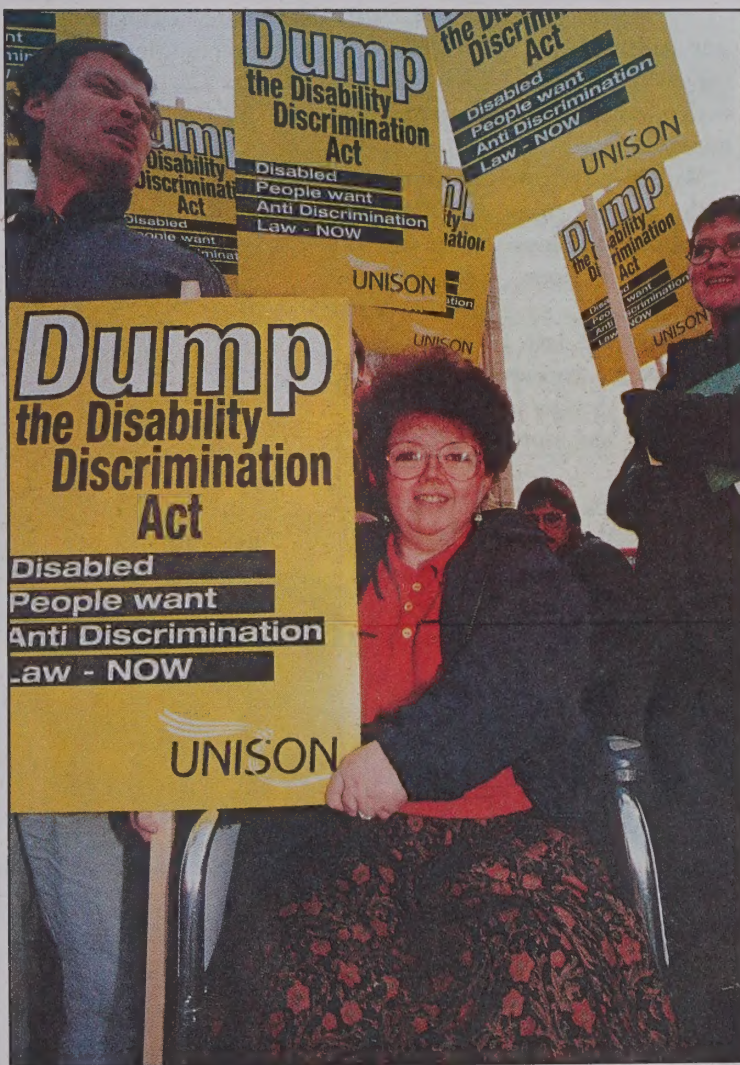
The Act was hailed by Minister for Disabled People, Alistair Burt, as "a fundamental advance for disabled people" and he said there can be no going back".

Royal Association for Disabil-

ity and Rehabilitation director, Bert Massie, said: "It's a milestone, an important mark along the way, but milestones are not the destination."

The Employers' Forum on Disability with 217 members, many of them high street names, welcomed the DDA and urged all employers to see it as an opportunity, not a threat.

But 1,000 people who converged on Westminster on 2 December rejected the DDA as inadequate, unenforceable, and legalising the discrimination of disabled people by small company employers. They demanded a disability rights commission, three quarters of which would be disabled people,



Angry: disabled people lobby the Commons

BRENT MOORE

to draft a full civil rights bill.

Adam Thomas of Rights Now, a coalition of 64 groups which organised the demonstration, said: "We hope that an incoming government will take notice of the strength of feeling

which this lobby has shown."

Brenda Hilditch, a wheelchair user from Manchester, said: "The Act is a load of rubbish and I am here to tell the Government."

Ann Parnell-McGarry, of

West Norwood, who has arthritis, said: "The DDA is a waste of breath and unworkable. This legislation is like being mugged."

Among the speakers were Shadow Minister for Disabled People, Tom Clarke, and Richard Howitt MEP.

Tom Clarke vowed: "A Labour government will deliver a disability rights commission and we will not go back on the pledge."

But he did not promise the repeal of the DDA or a civil rights bill.

Another 60 protestors from the Direct Action Network held up traffic in Whitehall by handcuffing themselves to buses.

Despite £4.5 million of Government spending on publicity, including a helpline launched in December (tel: (0345) 622633), there is still widespread ignorance of the Act. A survey in November by Disability in Business, a consortium of charities and firms, found that among 200 companies, one third were still unaware of it.

US insurer Unum predicts that more than 3,000 disabled staff could take their employers to an industrial tribunal in the next 12 months.

• A new video, *Access by Design*, from The Centre for Accessible Environments will help service providers to meet the DDA's access requirements.

Scope vote makes history

Glynn Vernon, an executive council member of Scope (right), celebrates after the charity's historic vote to make itself more representative of members.

Nearly 90 per cent of the annual general meeting voted to create two new categories - group individual members and independent individual members - who along with existing members will now have an equal say in how Scope is run.

The vote puts Scope, the UK's largest disability charity, ahead



STEVE HICKEY

of its peers in giving disabled people the opportunity to set its agenda.

Glynn Vernon said: "I feel very excited and elated."

"Now we can really move forward and talk about real empowerment, real involvement of disabled people and their families in Scope in an immediate way."

"Until now people have had no influence at all, except in an indirect way of relying on somebody else."

See page 2.

THERA•POSTURE

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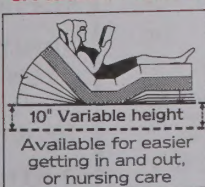
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Scope sweetheart: Chairman of SOS Dame Vera Lynn received a patron's award from chairman Anthony Hewson for her work with the society over more than 40 years. STEVE HICKEY

Getting more Scope

"The most significant resolution in Scope's 44 year history" was made last month, when the annual general meeting voted to broaden the charity's membership to make it more representative.

Chairman Anthony Hewson said the previous structure meant disabled people did not have the same rights in taking part in decisions about the future of the charity.

He said Scope was now "an organisation of solidarity – more at ease with itself".

The new system will come into operation next September.

The meeting also agreed on a new consultative structure by creating Partnership Committees and a National Forum – final pieces of a major change programme which was started five years ago.

Chief executive Richard Brew-

ster said: "We can start focusing on the outside world and, with new members, make a real impact.

"With this shift we can work with people from BCOBP-based organisations so that we don't lose our collective power."

He said the last 18 months had been concerned with rebuilding Scope, and added that there was more rebuilding to do.

Rex Walker, of the Pontefract Cerebral Palsy Support Group, said he voted for the change because, "it gets the groups away from the Christmas party and seaside trip image".

Alex Moira, a founder of Scope, welcomed the vote.

"It has the potential for change, but whether the charity will change depends on what the individuals will do."

Special school shame

A study into special schools has revealed damning evidence that they are failing disabled children.

Of 8,252 children covered in the study by the Alliance for Inclusive Education, only two had achieved five or more GCSEs at A to C level – the benchmark for entry into further education. Out of 85 special schools in the study, 49 had not entered any public examinations at all.

The study compared the performance of special with mainstream schools in 13 local authorities, using the 1995 national league tables for England and Wales.

Alliance co-ordinator Miche-

line Mason said the assumption was that children in special schools were unable to learn as well as other children.

The Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) said that of the children surveyed, only 939 were eligible to sit GCSEs, but admitted that of these, only three had gained five or more GCSEs at A to C level – less than one per cent.

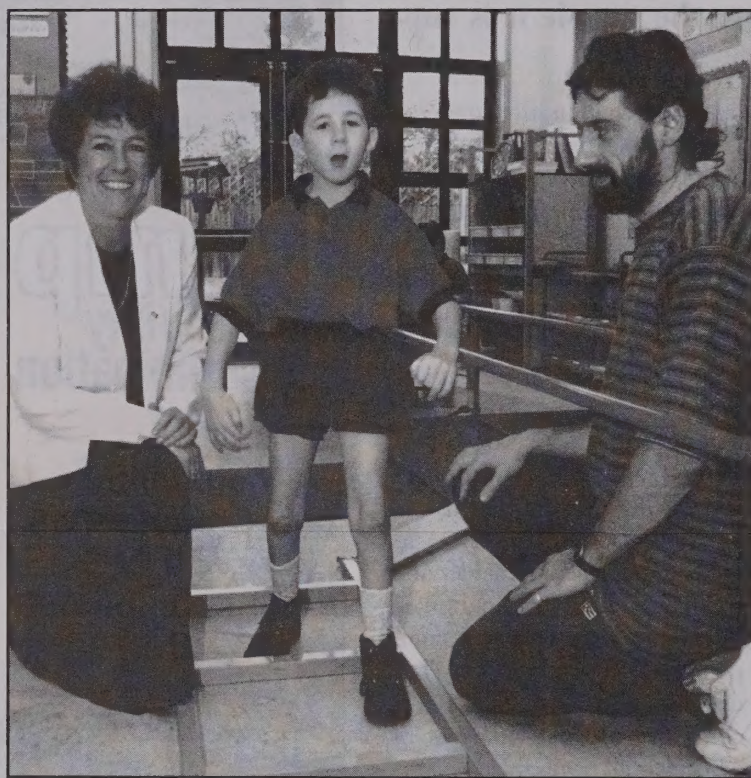
Mark Vaughan, co-director of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, said: "The writing is on the wall for special schools. Society should be working towards their closure."

Educational psychologist Jonathan Fogell, of the

National Association for Special Educational Needs, said: "Many special schools are taking children for whom mainstream schools are distressing or disturbing. To judge them on examination results is rather problematic."

A DFEE spokesperson said it was not possible to identify whether the children would have performed any differently at a different school.

• The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) claimed that of 500 special schools it inspected, only six per cent failed pupils, compared with two per cent who were failed at mainstream schools.



An important step: Dean Fox, eight, practices walking with bars at the National Institute of Conductive Education in Birmingham, watched by Jozsef Kaska, a teacher at the institute. Touchstone Housing Association donated £1,600 to the centre and Jane Wilde, the association's retirement housing manager, sees how the cash will help train teachers there.

TOUCHSTONE

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Scope, 12 Park Crescent
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Editorial: 0171-636 5020
Fax: 0171-436 4582
Minicom: 0171-436 9914

Editor Mary Wilkinson
Assistant Editor

Helen Gregory

Reporters Rod Hermeston
Jane Dunford

Features/Production Assistant Alison Miller
Editorial Assistant/Secretary Hayley Kerr
Design Consultant Nigel Tuckett

CIRCULATION

Manager Karen Bresloff
Deputy Manager

Helen Crow

Assistant Davina Long
Tel: 0171-383 4575

ADVERTISING

Richard Gresham, Kingslea Press Ltd, 12 Dock Offices, Surrey Quays Road, London SE16 2XU Tel: 0171-252 1362 Fax: 0171-237 8019

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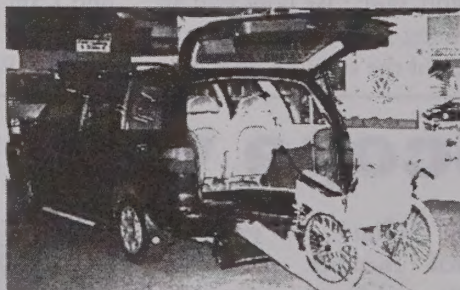
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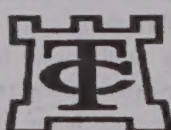
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U-turn on pensions

Thousands of ex-servicemen with hearing impairments are to lose out on benefits because of changes to Government rules.

The Government said in December that it had new medical advice that subsequent hearing loss is not linked to damage caused by noise during service, and that it will no longer pay increased war pensions to affected ex-servicemen whose hearing deteriorates.

The change will not affect existing war pensioners but will apply to applications for increases in pension.

Meanwhile, the Government has admitted saving billions of pounds since removing the link between average earnings and various disability benefits in 1980.

Minister for Disabled People Alistair Burt revealed that the saving on Attendance Allowance alone was £5,870m. In 1994-5 it was £1,185m.

Stop press

Cylinder warning

People with breathing problems using oxygen cylinders in their home should fit smoke alarms, says London Fire Brigade.

Its advice comes after Mandy Baker, 52, who had asthma, died in a house fire in Earl's Court, in November, in which a cylinder exploded.

A spokesperson said: "People need to be very safety conscious. Smoke alarms are a good idea."

Transport threat

London Accessible Transport Unit (which administers concessionary travel in London) looks set to have its staff levels cut, leading to fears over the future of cheap travel for disabled people.

However Redbridge borough councillor Simon Green said the fears were groundless.

Duchess has ME

The Duchess of Kent has been diagnosed as having ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis), the debilitating condition also known as chronic fatigue syndrome. The Duchess has been patron of Scope since 1968.

Exit for Baroness

Philosopher Baroness Warnock has signed a form from Exit, the pressure group supporting freedom of choice on euthanasia, to ease her death. The Baroness, 72, has helped shape many of Britain's moral codes and legislation on medical ethics.

Gulf War admission

The Government has admitted that it misled Parliament over the widespread use of harmful pesticides during the Gulf war.

It has also announced new research into the syndrome – a condition which it had refused to acknowledge. It will examine veterans' fertility and whether their children show an abnormal incidence in birth defects.



Burt puts the boot in

Minister for Disabled People, Alistair Burt, and Gary Lineker teamed up for a kick-about with staff and customers from Gateway – Mencap's leisure services.

Members of the all-party parliamentary football club also joined in the game, held near the House of Commons, to highlight the International Day for Disabled People on 3 December.

Events were held all over the country, including an open day at Osmondthorpe Resource Centre, near Leeds. DSS

Friends blame all work test for man's early death

A disabled man "worried himself to death" five days after he was declared fit to work by an all work test.

David Holmes, from Gwent, had a heart attack which friends believe was brought on by the shock of losing his £210 in mobility and incapacity benefits.

The 54-year-old first had a coronary attack 14 years ago and was told he could never work again.

But in October Mr Holmes was told he had to go back to work after a test by the Department of Social Security.



David Holmes

Mr Holmes had written a letter in protest at the decision, but died before he could post it.

"They've never seen me on a bad day trying to get my breath before I can dress," he wrote.

Friend Pauline Johnson said:

"He was worried to death about his benefits being stopped."

Mr Holmes' MP, Llew Smith, raised the issue in the House of Commons in December, but Minister for Disabled People, Alistair Burt defended the department's decision.

Not all in mind

Many people with mental illness have been treated unfairly by health care services, according to a report, *Not Just Sticks and Stones*, by the mental health charity MIND.

It looked at 778 people who have had a mental illness and reported that 33 per cent had been unfairly treated by their GP and 50 per cent had been treated unfairly by health care services.

In employment, 34 per cent of people said they had been sacked or forced out of a job, and 69 per cent had been deterred from applying for one. The most intolerant employment sectors were health and care, with 20 per cent of those

who thought they had been unfairly sacked coming from nursing, other caring professions, or the NHS.

MIND national director Judi Clements said the level of discrimination revealed by the report was staggering.

"Mental health is one of the most commonly experienced health problems," she said.

"How can people establish themselves in the community if they are refused a chance to work or contribute to society?"

Harrassment or abuse in public was experienced by 47 per cent. And 25 per cent of respondents had been turned down by insurance or finance firms.

GPs get tough on pay

Family doctors in Leeds have won their demand for extra payments to provide certain types of medical care to people in residential homes.

The GPs have negotiated the money from Leeds Health Authority for care which they do not consider part of their core service. The optional scheme is

in line with advice issued by the British Medical Association to GPs (*DN December*).

Dr Graham Kirkland, chairperson of Leeds local medical committee, said: "Work which junior house doctors used to deliver in hospitals is being thrust onto GPs. I do not see why we should do it for free."

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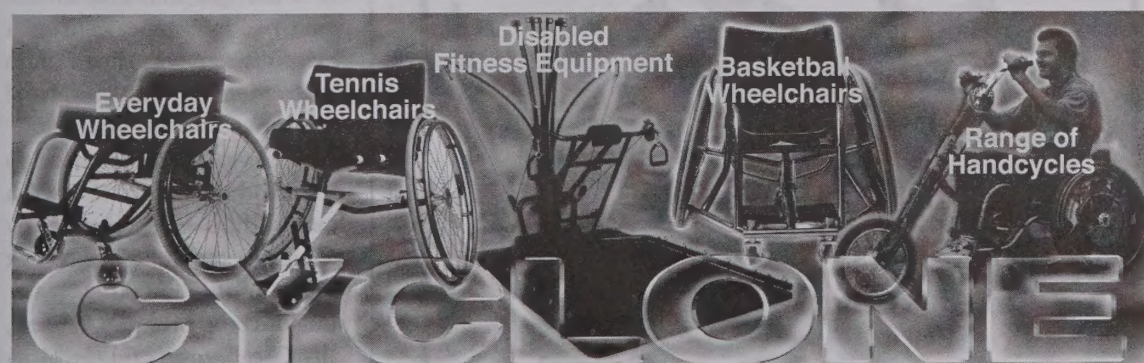
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Benefits uprating

Main benefits	Now (£/week)	April '97 (£/week)
Attendance allowance		
Higher	48.50	49.50
Lower	32.40	33.10
Child benefit		
First child	10.80	11.05
Each other child	8.80	9.00
Disability Living Allowance		
Care component:		
Higher	48.50	49.50
Middle	32.40	33.10
Lower	12.90	13.15
Mobility component:		
Higher	33.90	34.60
Lower	12.90	13.15
Disability Working Allowance		
Single adults	48.25	49.55
Couples/loner parents	75.60	77.55
Applicable amount (ie taper threshold):		
Single adults	56.40	57.85
Couples/loner parents	75.20	77.15
Family Credit		
Adult	46.45	47.65
Severe Disablement Allowance		
Basic rate	36.95	37.75
Age-related addition:		
Higher	12.90	13.15
Middle	8.10	8.30
Lower	4.05	4.15
Invalid Care Allowance	36.60	37.35
Incapacity Benefit		
Long term	61.15	62.45
Short term (under pension age)		
Lower	46.15	47.10
Higher	54.55	55.70
Short term (over pension age)		
Lower	58.65	59.90
Higher	58.65	59.90
Retirement Pension	61.15	62.45
Statutory sick pay		
Earnings threshold	61.00	62.00
Standard	54.55	55.70
War Disablement Pension (100%)		
Private or equivalent	105.00	107.20
Industrial Disablement Pension		
Over 18 (20% disability)	20.22	19.80
Under 18 (20% disability)	12.38	12.13
Over 18 (100% disability)	99.00	101.10
Under 18 (100% disability)	60.65	61.90
Widow's pension	61.15	62.45
INCOME SUPPORT		
Residential care homes		
Very dependent elderly	234.00	240.00
Physical disablement:		
Under pension age	276.00	285.00
Over pension age	203.00	208.00
Mental handicap	244.00	250.00
Max Greater London increase	38.00	41.00
Nursing homes		
Physical disablement:		
Under pension age	341.00	352.00
Over pension age	303.00	311.00
Mental handicap	310.00	318.00
Terminal illness	303.00	311.00
Max Greater London increase	43.00	46.00
Personal allowances		
Single, under 18 usual rate	28.85	29.60
Single, under 18 higher rate	37.90	38.90
Single, 18-24	37.90	38.90
Single, 25 or over	47.90	49.15
Couple, both under 18	57.20	58.70
Couple, one or both over 18	75.20	77.15

THANKS TO PAULINE THOMPSON OF THE DISABLEMENT INCOME GROUP

Doctors slam all work test

The relationship between doctor and patient can be poisoned by the all work test for incapacity benefit, a Commons select committee heard.

Doctors from the British Medical Association (BMA) told the social security committee in November that GPs did not like carrying out the tests or the increased workload.

"It's not for me to decide whether or not a patient gets benefit," said Dr Peter Holden.

"It can poison the relationship of the doctor and patient."

Dr Simon Fradd said the rate of appeal was appalling.

"There have been 36,000 appeals so far, with a 47 per cent success rate. It must be costing money and causing suffering."

Sarah Chapman, from Newcastle, who claims she broke her hand while taking the all work test (*DN October*), joined others from ailing campaign group Incapacity Action to urge MPs to repeal the Incapacity For Work Act.

She said the task of filling in the form, which has 89 questions, was daunting enough before the "unbelievable" medical.

Incapacity Action campaigner Barry Shaufler criticised the "point-scoring" system used to decide eligibility. He said it was particularly bad for those with invisible or intermittent disabilities and mental illness.



Labour of love: Tony Blair rewards 84-year-old John Ingham with the Life After Stroke Award from the Stroke Association. Mr Ingham, from Bradford, who has arthritis and is visually impaired, has cared for his father-in-law, aunt, and wife Cathleen over the years, who have all had strokes.

SINCLAIR MASON

Little cheer in budget

Kenneth Clarke's belt-tightening budget met with a gloomy response from social services and charities, who say carers, elderly and disabled people are the losers again.

Among the changes:

- Grants to local authorities to total £35.77 billion next year, leaving council taxpayers to plug the gap between that and authorities' spending £45.66 billion.

- The National Health Service will get a £1.6 billion increase for 1997-98.

- Prescription charges will

increase by 15p from next April, taking them to £5.65.

- Child benefit of £6.30 a week for single parents will be scrapped for new claimants from April 1998.

- Concession which allows a claim for Disability Living Allowance to be made for a year after reaching 65 to be removed.

- The Housing Corporation's building and maintenance programme cut by 35 per cent.

Social services directors fear the low support grant to local authorities will mean a substantial cut of more than four per cent in care services.

Association of Directors of Social Services president, Bob Lewis, said: "More elderly people will languish in hospital...carers and families will have to wait longer for assessments and will be even more likely to be told that they do not fall within the eligibility criteria for services."

It is thought that council tax could rise by six per cent next year to cover the shortfall in Government grants to local authorities.

The Government has tried to increase the cascade of wealth down the generations by increasing the inheritance tax threshold to £215,000.

But director of Age Concern, Sally Greengross, said the Government had done little to help the poorest pensioners.

She said the charity feared changes to Disability Living Allowance would prevent people over 65 from claiming benefit. Cuts to the Housing Corporation's building programme and housing renovation and disabled facilities grants would not help older people, she added.

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Shock in store

A claim that disabled people are not suited to working in convenience stores has shocked disability groups.

The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) declared last month that the convenience sector may not be a safe work place for disabled employees.

"With increasing violence and verbal abuse against retail staff it would be highly irresponsible to put disabled staff and the security of the store at risk," said chief executive Trevor Dixon.

Because of the small number of staff and the variety of the work it would be "totally impractical to expect a disabled person to be able to operate in such a situation", although they

would be very welcome as customers, he added.

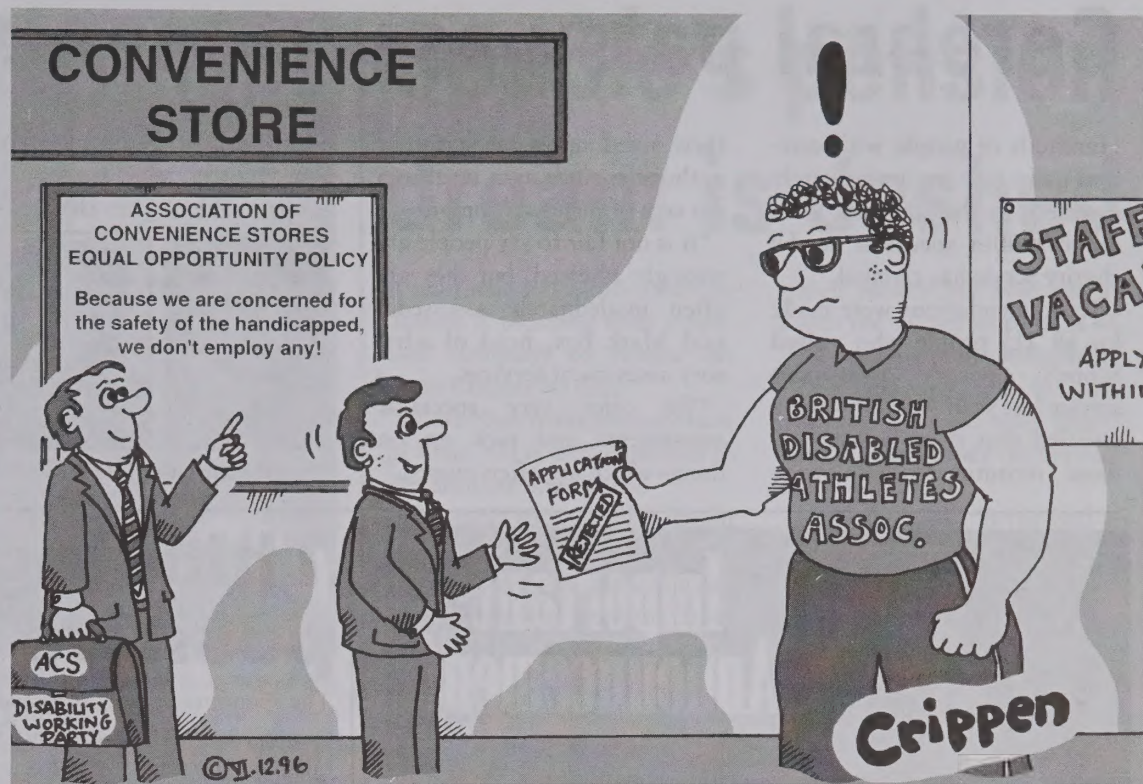
Disability rights campaigner Rachel Hurst was astounded.

"Conveniently the convenience stores can be discriminatory, offensive and inaccurate by assuming that all disabled people are useless and cannot possibly do two things at once," she said.

A spokesman for convenience stores 7-Eleven said they did, and would continue to, employ disabled people.

"If someone can do the job we can consider employing them."

Ian Woodman has learning difficulties and works in a 7-Eleven. He said: "Disabled people should be able to work in shops like this if they want."



"Sorry to turn you down - it's just that you disabled people are so vulnerable!"

Benefit centres on the line

Benefits offices in Wales could close, leaving it harder for disabled people to get information on benefits.

The Benefits Agency is proposing to close all of its 37 Public Caller Offices, which include three "One Stop" offices, by April 1998.

Instead there will be 16 processing locations, making a saving of £12.3 million a year.

It also plans to set up three Telephone Call Centres across Wales, employing 225 staff.

A report says: "Public Caller Offices already cater in the main for only a small proportion of our customers, local to where they are sited."

The Telephone Call Centres will be supported by an appointments system so that customers can make an appointment at an agency office or an "appropriate location".

A Benefits Agency spokesman said because some offices were now only open two hours a week, the proposed system would be more convenient.

Disability Wales director, Howard John, said the possible closures would mean disabled people would find it harder to get help.

"Many people appreciate the personal contact, which they would lose.

"They go to their local town and manage to go shopping and visit the benefits agency at the same time, but it would be harder for them if they had to go somewhere else.

"Few offices now have a loop system or signers anyway, so I can't see that getting easier."

Disabled staff bullied at work

Disabled staff at Camden Council are regularly bullied, according to a report commissioned by the Camden Unison Disabilities Group.

The survey from Staffordshire University showed that 75 per cent of the disabled workers who responded had been bullied in a six-month period.

The findings contradicted a report by the council published last September which denied there was a problem.

Of the 40 disabled members of Camden Unison, 16 responded to the questionnaire and 12 said they had been bullied by management. Nine said the bullying was still taking place.

One disabled woman who had put up with three years of bullying told DN that the stress had made her hair fall out.

"Three senior workers constantly bullied me, with mostly

verbal, nasty abuse. I ended up feeling suicidal and became very depressed.

"Bullying is common in the council and it is not just disabled people that are picked on. Few people talk about it as they are worried about their jobs."

David Eggmore of Camden Unison said the survey had proved that bullying did exist.

"Quite a few people did not respond but a high proportion came back and said that they were bullied, which was something the council denied.

"The council should accept that bullying is going on."

A spokeswoman for Camden council said: "We are concerned that any claims made by any council staff regarding bullying are sensitively and fully investigated.

"Efforts are underway to tackle the problem."

Faults with Walt

People with scoliosis, a condition causing curvature of the spine, have been subjected to increased abuse since Walt Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was released, it was claimed.

The cartoon also picked up an award for a feature film's worst portrayal of disability in the Raspberry Ripple Awards held in December.

The One in Eight Group holds the awards to highlight good and bad portrayals of disability.

The Disney cartoon shows the hunchbacked hero Quasimodo being crowned the Prince of Fools.

Richard Reiser, co-ordinator

of One in Eight, said he had heard of many people with scoliosis being insulted in the streets since the film had come out.

BBC-TV's *Children in Need* '95

picked up the award for worst non-fictional portrayal, for its use of disabled children as objects of pity.

Taggart Dead Man's Gold by Scottish TV took the award for the worst portrayal in tv drama.



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Cerebral palsy assessments not always spot on

Hundreds of people with cerebral palsy (cp) are inadequately assessed by health and local authorities, a specialist at the charity Scope has claimed.

Recommendations were made for all 215 people who visited Scope's advisory assessment service last year. A recent survey revealed that three-quarters of these recommendations were

then acted upon by statutory authorities and, as a result, 65 per cent of clients saw progress.

"It is not fair to say people are wrongly assessed, but they are often inadequately assessed," said Mark Fox, head of advisory assessment services.

"We offer very specialist assessments and pick up on things which are often missed."

Sue Bird, of Hertford, whose son Andrew was assessed by Scope, said: "The change in



Andrew Bird and Grant Walker

Andrew is remarkable. His visual perceptual problems were spotted for the first time, so we could get him appropriate treatment.

"The local authority wanted him to go to a special school but with Scope's assessment we kept him in the mainstream."

Gina Abbott's 12-year-old son Grant, from London, was assessed by Scope. She believes

the assessments should be Government-funded.

"People are not getting treatment they need because local authorities cannot provide the necessary assessments."

A spokeswoman for the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts said: "This is an area health authorities have been looking into."

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Thinking positive

The spending power of disabled people and carers is at least £30 billion, according to Robert Hart, Sainsbury's equal opportunities manager. He called it "a significant market segment" which must be taken seriously.

Other speakers at the Towards The Next Millennium conference, run by the Department of Health last month in London, emphasised the "positive developments for disabled people in this country", as Minister for Disabled People Alistair Burt put it. There was an exhibition too.

Richard Wood, director of the British Council of Disabled People, highlighted the positive effects, such as direct payments, of the Government working with disabled people.



Frozen stakes: The BBC weather team joined forces on behalf of Scope to put £250 bets donated by bookmakers William Hill on this year's Christmas Day weather. If it snows in four places in the UK, Scope stands to win £4,500 – or will get the stake money back if it doesn't.

Top-up benefit just isn't working

Only 10,519 people were claiming Disability Working Allowance (DWA) in July this year, despite the Government's belief that 50,000 people would be making use of the benefit.

DWA aims to help disabled people into work by supplementing their wage.

But between 1992 and 1995, only two per cent (30,000) of the 1.5 million people of working age who received one of the

main incapacity benefits, had moved into full-time work.

A report from the Department of Social Security said: "DWA was not designed to increase the demand for labour...or reduce employer discrimination. But our evidence, along with that from other studies, suggests these were major barriers."

The department blames low awareness as one reason for the low take-up, but said those who

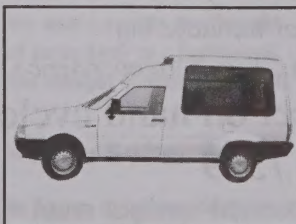
were aware of the benefit in 1993 were no more likely than others to move into work in the following two years.

Pauline Thompson, director of the Disablement Income Group, said barriers such as a savage means test, low rates and the fact that people had to work at least 16 hours a week prevented many from claiming.

"It needs a big overhaul," she said.

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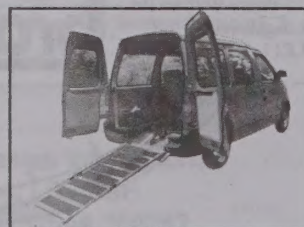
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What's in DN next month?

■ **LET THE TRAIN TAKE THE STRAIN** – a trip round Europe and other great holidays.

■ **VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL** DN shows you how to be lucky in love.

■ **GENERAL ELECTION** First of a series that will help you make the most of your vote.

Plus all the best news, views, arts, jobs and offers. On sale 29 January.

In brief

Ferry good show

Stella Line Ferries was voted best transport operator by the Holiday Care Service in its annual awards.

The ferry firm came top for its good service to disabled people in the charity's first transport category award.

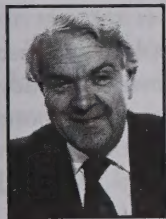
Other winners were: Glenavon House Hotel in County Tyrone, (accommodation of 20 bedrooms and over); Websters in Salisbury (accommodation of 20 bedrooms and under); Cider Barrel in Colyton, Devon (self catering accommodation); Drusillas Park in Alfriston, East Sussex (best attraction); customer service staff at New Street station in Birmingham (most helpful individual).

The write stuff

A disabled employee of Hammersmith and Fulham council, Bridget Horgan, won first prize in City University's Rehab Network Awards with an essay on the council's policy towards disabled job applicants.

Scott loses seat

Nicholas Scott – the former Minister for Disabled People who lost his job after contributing to the downfall of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill in May 1994 – has been deselected



by his constituency. Ironically, his own downfall coincided with the introduction of the Disability

Discrimination Act in December.

The Kensington and Chelsea MP was found in a gutter during the Tory conference in Bournemouth last year.

Banking on it

Midland Bank now has qualified sign interpreters, lipspeakers or note-takers in all branches. The bank's drive to help deaf and hearing impaired customers is explained in a booklet *Services for Disabled Customers*.

Tel: (0345) 707070

Driving rights home

Privilege Insurance has launched Mobility Master, an insurance scheme which offers many benefits to the disabled driver and promises to insure any driver with a licence without asking for medical records or GP referrals.

Tel: 0113-243 2211

Correction

From DN's December issue: Chrysler Jeep Imports telephone number is (01304) 244004.



UK Woman of Europe nominee Rachel Hurst could not attend the award ceremony at the European Commission's London office because there was no access for wheelchairs. Ms Hurst, chair of Disabled People's International, Europe region, was furious that no effort was made to make the building accessible. "They only let me know the night before that no ramp would be provided," she said.

War of independence

Leading US disability rights campaigners are urging their British counterparts to use protest as a hammer to shame firms into good practice.

Bob Kafka and Stephanie Thomas from Austin, Texas, visited Britain in November and shared their experiences with activists from the Direct Action Network (DAN) in Birmingham.

The couple, from campaigning group Adapt of Texas, had a leading role in helping to bring about the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Mr Kafka said: "People focus on what goes on in London and Parliament but you need things

to bubble up locally."

The pair say the US legal avenues of change are still slow and not adequately supported by the Government.

"We use protest as a hammer to show that a business is not in compliance and to shame them," said Ms Thomas.

DAN national organiser Alan Holdsworth said: "This is the first time nationally DAN has had the chance to work with those people."



Bob Kafka

Couple's pension dream is dashed

A man who has motor neurone disease is pleading with a pension company to release his money before he dies.

Brian Nye, from Swanscombe in Kent, 57, is only expected to live another three years.

He wants to realise his dream of swimming with dolphins in Florida before he dies, but can only claim his pension from Scottish Life when he reaches 65.

Mr Nye paid into the pension for 20 years, but the £8,000 in the fund is covered by protected rights legislation which the firm says it cannot legally pay out.

Spokesman Alistair Buchanan said: "It's very unfortunate but we are governed by legislation

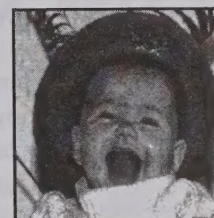
which means Mr Nye cannot touch the money until he is 65. The rules are pretty inflexible."

The company said his wife Tanya, 31, would only receive some of the money on her husband's death.

Mrs Nye said: "Brian had to give up work last September and we survive on my income as a salesperson."

"When he opened the pension, he wasn't given the option to make extra contributions, which if he had, would have made things easier."

"Surely there should be a clause in a private pension that would allow people suffering like my husband to claim money that is rightfully theirs before they die?"



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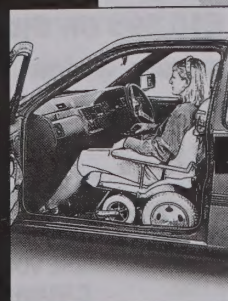
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MS boss hits back

Doctors have questioned the value of the multiple sclerosis drug beta-interferon, which has an annual cost of £10,000 per patient, prompting an angry response from a MS group.

An article in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) in November by Richard Richards, consultant in public health with North Nottinghamshire health authority, says the drug does not slow down the onset of disability, which is the main goal of treatment. And, while it reduces relapses by 30 per cent, the cost of preventing a single relapse is £33,000. In theory, to keep a patient relapse-free, it could cost £1m in a lifetime.

The drug is recommended by the NHS. But Dr Richards argues that other requests for developments in health care offer a greater health benefit.

Meanwhile, researchers from Stockport, East Lancashire, and Sefton health authorities, argue in the same issue of the *BMJ* that they have had to fund the drug even though it was not as good value as drugs for other conditions.

Peter Cardy, chief executive of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, said: "The assumption is that relapses are not worth treating, but relapses are profoundly disabling, and can be extremely destructive.

"The drug is only suitable for a small proportion of people but many of them are being denied the opportunity to be

treated because it has been dismissed out of hand by people who have not understood the importance of relapses.

"Many purchasers have seemed to find one reason after another why this drug should not be used, which have less to do with the known benefits and side-effects than the prospect of having to fund it."

While there are about 90,000 people in the UK with MS, only a few hundred have been prescribed the drug so far. It can only be prescribed by specialists.

AIDS drug demand

Combinations of drugs can significantly reduce the risk of blindness and cancer in people infected with HIV, doctors said in November.

When used in combination with established treatments such as ddC or AZT, a group of drugs called nucleoside inhibitors can cause HIV levels to fall to undetectable levels.

Speaking at the International Congress on Drug Therapy in HIV Infection in Birmingham, Peter Ruane, a Los Angeles AIDS expert, said that infections by cytomegalovirus (CMV), which causes blindness, were prevented when the combination of drugs were used.

He added that Kaposi's sarcoma, a cancer commonly affecting AIDS patients, often disappeared.

Doctors believe that once



Michael Gingell, 3, is the youngest autistic child in Britain to be on a special diet, excluding casein, a protein found in milk, and gluten, a protein contained in wheat products. That means eating lots of home made bread and cakes and drinking pear juice. Researchers in Sunderland are examining the idea that some cases of autism could be caused by a failure to break down toxins found in food, but stress that the theory has not yet been confirmed.

MARTIN CHAINEY

virus levels fall, the immune system will fight off infections.

However such treatments can cost up to £10,000 annually.

A spokesperson for the AIDS charity the Terrence Higgins Trust, which is campaigning to have the treatments made available to more people in the UK, said: "Combination therapies are not a cure but improve the quality and length of people's lives. They should be made available.

"Opportunistic infections can be expensive to treat too."

Switching off pain

British scientists have found a protein which can "switch off" the bone damage and pain caused by rheumatoid arthritis.

The condition occurs when white blood cells leave the bloodstream and start attacking the joints.

Experts at London's William Harvey Research Institute have discovered a natural protein, known as lipocortin-1, which

controls this process.

If the protein carries a negative message, it can cause the blood cells to return to the bloodstream.

The team hopes that in the long-term the discovery could lead to new treatments for the condition, but it warns that this could take some time to come through.

About half a million people in the UK have rheumatoid arthritis which can cause serious and painful disabilities.

Dr Mauro Perretti, who led the research with Professor Roderick Flower, said: "The pharmaceutical industry has already indicated its interest."

HRT in spotlight

Scientists have launched the first ever international study into the benefits and dangers of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

It will look at the way HRT can affect the bone thinning condition osteoporosis, strokes, heart disease and breast cancer.

More than 30,000 women between 50 and 64 will take part in the 25-year trial.

One in three women in their 50s in the UK now take HRT, which replaces hormones which are no longer produced after the menopause.

The treatment is thought to reduce the risk of heart disease and a recent American study showed that it increased bone density, although it has been linked to a slightly increased risk of breast cancer.

The research known as the Women's International Study of Long Duration Oestrogen after Menopause (WISDOM), will be run by Madge Vickers of the Medical Research Council.

Diagnosis shock

Up to 25 per cent of people told they have Alzheimer's disease actually have Lewy Body dementia, according to a charity.

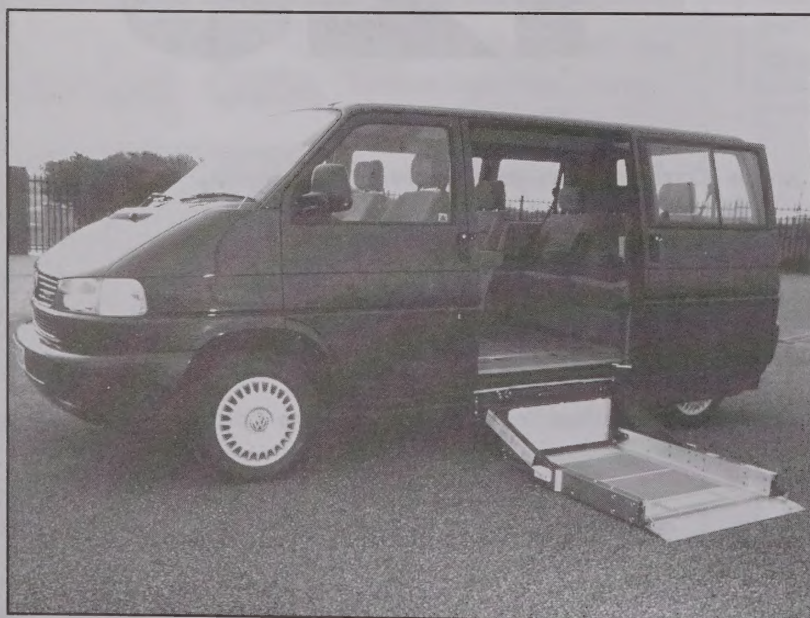
The group, Research Into Ageing, says that the condition, which involves bouts of confusion and clarity, needs different treatments from Alzheimer's and that people may be losing out on the most effective therapies.

Elizabeth Mills, director of Research into Ageing, said: "Sufferers of Lewy Body dementia and their families need recognition and special support."

Meanwhile, researchers in Newcastle have discovered that a sedative commonly given to people with dementia could lead to life threatening side-effects.



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Shopping on the move

The Shopmobility scheme celebrates the opening of its 150th scheme in Oxford this month. Helen Gregory charts its progress.

The number of Shopmobility schemes is set to double in the next couple of years – giving more disabled people the chance to get to their local shops.

Oxford town centre saw the launch of the 150th scheme this month and the National Federation of Shopmobility (NFS) (logo right) which gives advice and information has 108 towns queuing up to take part.

Milton Keynes was the first town to start lending wheelchairs and scooters and providing volunteers to accompany shoppers in 1981.

By 1990 there were 17 schemes around the UK, and the idea really took off.

NFS chairman Neil Laidlaw said 200,000 people were making 75,000 trips with the scheme each year. "The benefits to a town of having Shopmobility are tried, tested and proven."

NFS national co-ordinator Joss McLeod jokes that the pace now is frightening.

"It is excellent though, as the impetus is coming from disabled people themselves."

Ms McLeod sees Shopmobility as a vital link in the community transport chain.

"It is the only pedestrian element in the chain, and as more shopping areas are becoming pedestrianised, Shopmobility is becoming more necessary to make sure these places are not becoming no-go areas."

Most people who use the scheme are over 50 and have mobility problems which are not severe enough to warrant full-time wheelchair use. For them, scooters rather than wheelchairs are the most popular method of transport.

Ms McLeod says younger people and those who are more severely disabled usually have their own equipment.

Nearly sixty per cent of schemes are run and funded as registered charities, five per cent are commercially-run (by shopping centres, for example) and the rest are run by councils.

Only a couple of schemes have fallen by the wayside due to lack of funding but more are having to charge to pay for running costs.

Ms McLeod says the number

of those charging is still less than 10 per cent of the 150 currently running, but that looks set to increase.

She believes town access is vital to each scheme's future.

"Shopmobility has to go hand-in-hand with town planning.

"There's still a lot of work to be done with access groups, but we are finding retailers are becoming

much better at addressing access issues. Shops are improving at a faster pace than local authority buildings."

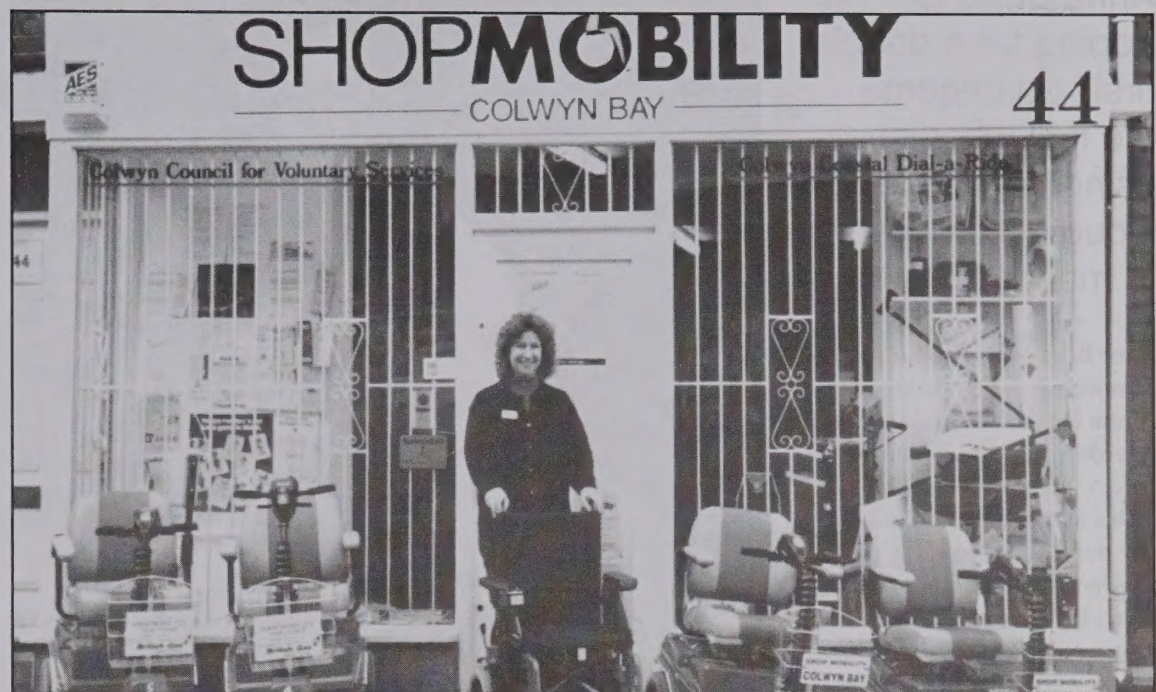
Many places, including big cities, still do not have a scheme, central London included.

"I'm hopeful that we can set something up in the capital in the next five years, but it will need a lot of work."

Rose Corrigan from Edinburgh has used her local scheme for four years.

Mrs Corrigan, 70, has a wheelchair and says the electric scooter she borrows is a godsend.

"I wouldn't be able to go shopping otherwise."



Shopmobility schemes, like this one in Colwyn Bay, are springing up all over the country

Bright idea was good sense

Wheelchair user Roger Goodacre and two friends were worried that they and other disabled people would be excluded from a new shopping centre planned for their town.

The three members of Peterborough and District Disabled Drivers' Association met planners of the Queensgate centre in 1980 and the Shopmobility scheme was conceived.

Because it took time to build, the shopping centre in Milton



Roger Goodacre

Keynes just beat the friends' scheme in being the first to open, but the friends saw how its scheme operated and took notes.

"We were going to open with four wheelchairs, but saw how successful they were, and bought ten instead."

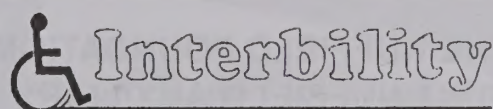
Keynes just beat the friends' scheme in being the first to open, but the friends saw how its scheme operated and took notes.

At first Mr Goodacre says they had no customers for days at a time, but gradually word spread.

His wife Sylvia is now the town's co-ordinator, and she saw 1,000 people use the service in the six weeks before Christmas last year.

"I never thought there would be this many towns with Shopmobility.

"Other countries are now following our example – we seem to be leading Europe in this field."



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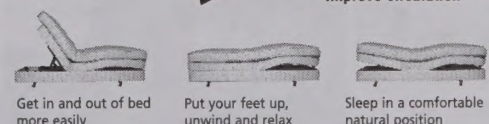
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Teacher on a power trip

Anne Begg is hoping for a double first – to become the first wheelchair-using, female MP. Dougie Herd went to meet her.

Anne Begg – the Labour party's prospective parliamentary candidate for the winnable seat of Aberdeen South – is not my wife.

This needs to be said in case any pupil at Arbroath Academy reads *Disability Now*. Let me explain.

It was the day after Kenneth Clarke's budget and his claim that education was to receive lots of money did not seem to be going down well with her colleagues when I met Anne at the school where she teaches English. They voiced their concerns to her and offered opinions about how she could promote education policy when she works in Westminster.

These teachers seemed to operate on the basis that the notion of "Anne Begg MP" was a question of when, not if, their colleague was elected.

Anne and I ate school lunch together and talked in her classroom. We had been together for only an hour but the school's rumour machine was in overdrive already. One of



Anne is passionately concerned about civil rights

PA

Anne's colleagues informed us that the word was out among pupils. "Miss Begg's husband was in school." It must be so – she had been seen at lunch with a man in a wheelchair.

"There is still some way to go before the world is free of stereotyped misconceptions about disabled people," she says.

Such as the small detail of us getting married off because we

both use wheelchairs.

How do pupils respond to a teacher in a wheelchair?

"They don't notice," says Anne. "Teachers get called names but if I can't handle that I shouldn't be a teacher. They looked at me for the first week, but after that I was just a teacher."

Anne recounts how she has become a port of call for

modern studies students investigating what disabled people need in the community.

"Too often I have had to fend off eager questioners who want to know if 'disabled people would want to join a club where they can play darts and drafts and things...?'"

Things? Like being a respected colleague, a principal teacher of English, trade union activist, member of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, branch secretary of the Brechin Labour Party, and of course, candidate for election to the biggest club of them all – the House of Commons.

Anne is passionately interested in education. She always wanted to teach, but it was an ambition which prejudice and discrimination almost thwarted.

In 1973 the medical officer at Aberdeen College of Education believed that people with Gaucher's disease could not be teachers. He denied Anne access to the course, even though she had the entrance qualifications. Annoyed but undaunted, Anne studied politics at Aberdeen University before taking the post-graduate qualification route into teaching. Eighteen years later, the medical officer has been emphatically proved wrong.

Politics is another early memory but a more recent

passion for Anne. Her father was active in the Labour Party after the Second World War. Anne remembers clearly as a seven-year-old helping to deliver election leaflets. Thirty-three years later, it is Anne's photograph on the leaflets being stuffed through letter boxes.

If Aberdeen South's voters unseat the current MP, their new representative will have clear goals.

It almost goes without saying that 'Ann Begg MP' wants a Labour Government. This outcome seems likely to many but, because it is not guaranteed, Anne will deepen her commitment to the punishing routine of canvassing. She does not intend to be merely parliamentary lobby fodder, however, and hopes to make a difference as an MP.

'I intend that the Parliament I am a member of will deliver full civil rights for disabled people.'

"Education will remain a burning issue. As a woman entering Parliament, I want to make it less of an 'old boys' club'. I also want to be part of the Government which delivers a Scottish Parliament," she says.

Similarly, civil rights for disabled people is a key concern – politically and personally.

"I will not be a single issue politician, but I intend that the Parliament I am a member of will deliver full civil rights for disabled people."

Anne believes her party shares her commitment. The proof of the pudding will be in its eating of course, but it partly explains why she wants to be in Parliament. To get things done.

Faced with the prospect of becoming the first wheelchair user elected to the House of Commons, Anne is refreshingly honest. She quotes the closing lines of Robert Burn's poem *To a Mouse* where he worries that "An forward, tho' I canna see, I guess an' fear!"

The future is full of uncertainty. Poor access, though, is Parliament's problem to solve. Anne intends to get elected and says, "The least Parliament can do is remove the barriers which limit disabled people's access to power." What happens after that is politics – a subject Anne Begg needs few lessons in.

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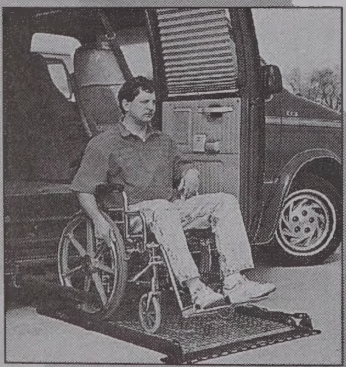
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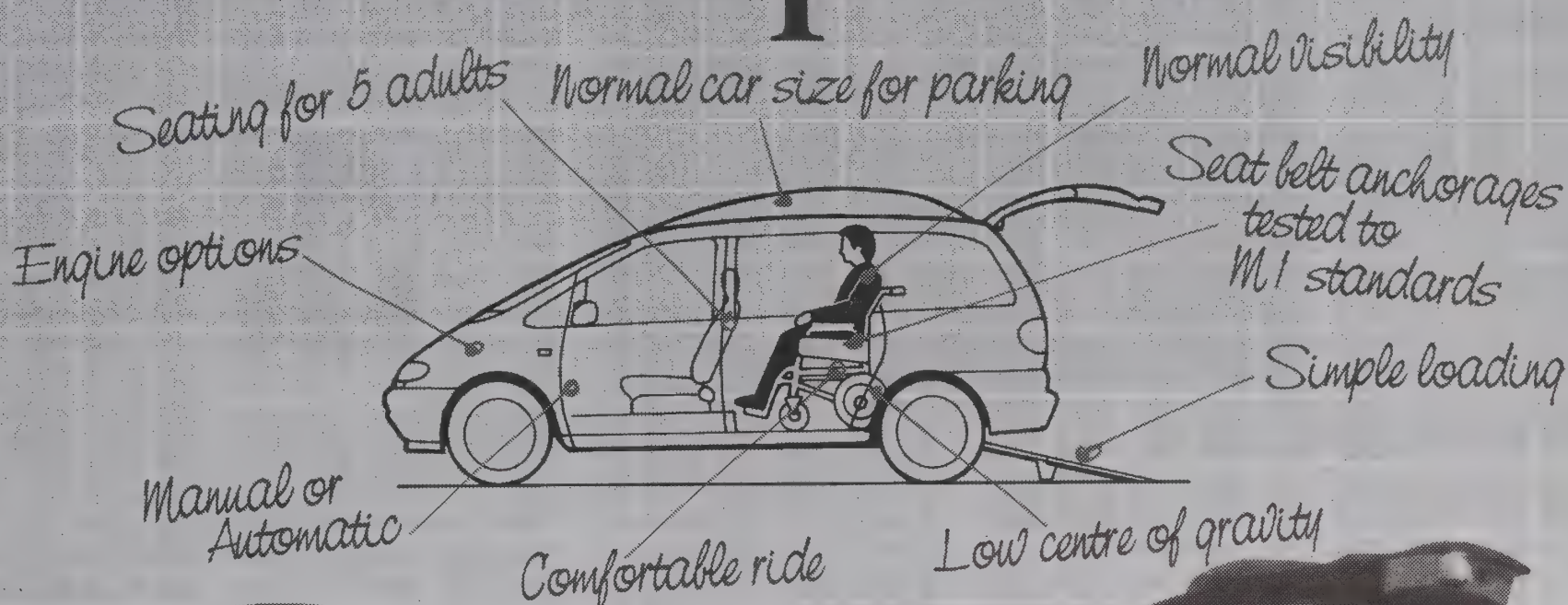
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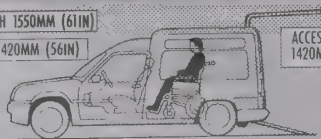


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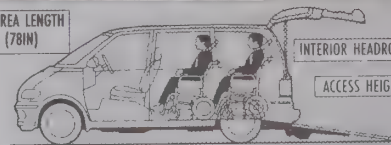
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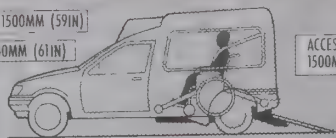


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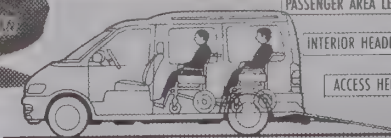
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Elderly and disabled people are fed up with the level of care they

Paying the price of caring

The care business often fails elderly and disabled customers, as Rod Hermeston and Helen Gregory discover

Caring is big business.

Since 1993 when care in the community was introduced, hundreds of care agencies have sprung up.

The Department of Health insists that 85 per cent of the cash which it sets aside for local authorities to provide community care should be spent in the independent sector. There are now estimated to be at least 1,500 agencies around the UK, in a multi-million pound industry.

They fill the gap left by cash-strapped local authorities who are forced to delegate responsibility for social services to save money.

But, unlike residential homes, the firms do not have to be registered. The care assistants they employ do not need to have training or qualifications and it is difficult to check whether carers have criminal records.

This can leave some disabled people at the mercy of untrained, inexperienced or, at worst, uncaring carers.

Lord (Norman) Tebbit, who



Disabled people can be totally dependent on private carers

has personal experience of caring through his wife Margaret, has said the training of carers is in a "deplorable state".

He commented: "The NVQ qualification currently available seems to be more about telling carers they should tell their clients about their rights not to be discriminated against...than about telling them how to clean someone else's teeth."

While local authorities can set standards within their contracts with care agencies, cash constraints mean they are tempted to go for the cheapest tender, which may not be the best.

The Carers' National Association often hears complaints

from disabled people about poor care. Spokesperson Gail Elkington says: "If nothing is done, the situation is potentially dangerous."



Lucianne Sawyer

"Local authorities should have a duty to regulate and monitor them," says assistant director, Francine Bates.

The UK Home Care Association (UKHCA) was set up six years ago to raise standards of

caring and has 900 members around the country.

Agencies join on a voluntary basis but must meet certain standards within its code of practice.

The association wants a national registration scheme for agencies.

President Lucianne Sawyer acknowledges that low cost care can be poor care.

"People are cutting costs to put in very low bids, but local authorities cannot expect to get good quality services for such a low price," she says.

"Some agencies are now charging only £6 an hour, which means they cannot be doing adequate training."

She has heard of people being paid £3.20 an hour.

Ms Sawyer is also concerned that care agencies cannot vet new recruits properly.

A Bill to allow care users and agencies to request police checks on carers is going through Parliament.

The Government's proposed Criminal Records Agency would mean someone could pay to check a carer's record.

The UKHCA thinks this would

not go far enough. "Care workers should be checked by police on a statutory basis," it says.

The Government has been criticised by charities for its poor strategy on care provision and a white paper due to be published in the new year may reject proposals for greater control.

In a report into social services last September, independent assessor Tom Burgner called for local authorities to register and regulate and be responsible for domiciliary care agencies.

But Secretary of State for Health Stephen Dorrell has already said he will not commit himself to the proposal.

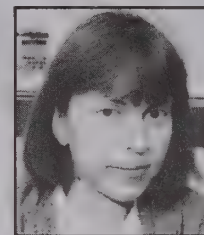
He also rejected the case for a self-regulating association, under which all care workers in social services would have to register before they could be employed.

Instead he proposed a voluntary body which would develop standards the Government might later recommend for general use.

Many local authorities are dissatisfied with the situation.

Chair of the Association of the Directors of Social Services Disabilities Committee, Roy Taylor, says: "The whole domiciliary care market needs to be regulated."

But organisations of disabled people are wary.



Jane Campbell

Jane Campbell, of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), says compulsory regulation by local

authorities can only work in full consultation with disabled people, with the emphasis on tailoring assistance to their wants and needs.

Ms Campbell hopes that agencies will be forced to provide better services once the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act comes into effect in April.

This will give local authorities discretion to allow disabled people under 65 the right to buy their own care directly.

"Agencies will have to change their services and base them on facilitation and assistance."

BCODP is launching a Government-funded National Centre for Independent Living at the end of the month, to advise local groups on setting up independent living schemes.

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are receiving from agencies around the UK. What's to be done?



Worried: Tim Williamson

'Staff are potentially dangerous'

Tim Williamson has had care help for the last two and a half years and knows just how erratic services can be.

Mr Williamson, 50, from Brighton, has multiple sclerosis, and needs a carer to put him to bed every evening, using a hoist.

"Of the many carers I have had during this time, only three have left me feeling confident and relaxed at the prospect of their return," he says.

"All of them work a lot of hours and two have other jobs which provide their main income. None of them is earning a fortune.

"Many carers are genuinely well-intentioned people but they seem to combine heroic dimness with their frequently-stated intention to help you.

"The trouble is, you can get stuck with carers with whom you are obliged to reach some sort of compromise, simply because you cannot be sure what you would get if you opt for change. Even worse, you are not always able to state your reservations because you cannot afford to upset your carer – you could wait a long time for relief!

"Some of the recently-established agencies have staff who are potentially dangerous.

"There were times when I could have fallen out of my hoist.

"One carer, whose first language was Arabic, had only been in this country for 18 months and did not know what a hoist was. Another carer regularly came earlier than the prescribed time. He explained that his girlfriend didn't really like him getting home too late.

"Changing agencies would change little or nothing.

"Social services should insist that agencies conform to certain minimum standards before they can qualify for funded contracts.

"Carers should register with social services. At present there is no control over who can be a carer."

'Low pay did not help situation'

Alan Marshall, 47, from Marehay near Ripley, turned to Derbyshire Coalition for Integrated Living after becoming unhappy with the carers sent to him by his former agency.

Mr Marshall says he was sent a total of 35 carers in 15 months by the agency Direct Health while he was receiving 24-hour "live-in-care" from the company. He says carers could be patronising.

"One of the contributing factors to such a high turnover of workers was the low rate of pay."

He says this worked out at about £1.79 per hour. Yet the agency charges £475 per week for the 24-hour service (£2.72 an hour).

Direct Health managing director Roger Adams stresses that his company is a member of UKHCA and regulated by Derbyshire County Council.

"A high turnover of staff can depend on how the client relates to people coming into their home. Respect is needed on all sides," he says.

He says carers are paid about £45 for a 24-hour period, during which they are on duty in a person's home, but the workload is equal to a ten-hour day.

"Training is given in the home to ensure an appropriate service."

'Carers learn as they go'

Barking and Dagenham social services tendered Frank Sinclair's care out to a local charity, the Disablement Association Barking and Dagenham, two years ago.

Mr Sinclair, 66, is severely disabled and needs to be washed and hoisted into a wheelchair.

His wife Norah, 61, says some of the carers the charity sent did not have the training or experience to deal with a person as severely disabled as her husband.

"They had been hairdressers and barmaids. I cannot fault them in their attitude and their helpful-

ness, but they are untrained and learn as they go."

This can happen when stand-ins are sent if his usual carers are off, she says.

"It restricts me because I need



Restricted: Norah Sinclair

to supervise and explain to them what the particular problems are."

Brian Walker, chair of the Disablement Association, has promised it will look into the matter.

He says the Sinclairs' usual carers were trained auxiliary nurses. "We've had no formal or informal complaints.

"We never put a carer out without at least first aid training and very early they will have lifting training, preferably before they go out."

He adds that the charity is regulated by the local authority.



Stressed: Sandy Spanner

'My partner was training carers'

Sandy Spanner, 44, from Hampshire, has a spinal injury and cannot move.

She had been receiving satisfactory care from the Independent Living Organisation Ltd (ILO), but says it suddenly started sending unsuitable stand-ins.

"Some came from Africa with a poor grasp of English.

"I have got hoists but they did not know how to operate anything until they had been shown.

"They did not know the basics

of cooking. I would have to go over and over the instructions for making a meal.

Ms Spanner says her partner was coming home from work and having to train the carers in his spare time.

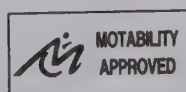
ILO provided care for 18 months.

A spokesman says: "Subsequently two ethnic carers were introduced. This proved to be unsatisfactory to Mrs Spanner and we therefore gave notice and withdrew the provision of care."



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Letters to the Editor



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e-mail: dnow@d-access.demon.co.uk

Turned down for adoption

I would like to highlight the issue of discrimination against disabled people wanting to adopt a non-disabled child.

I am disabled, but my husband is able-bodied. Recently we applied to our social services to adopt a child of around four or five years old.

We were told immediately that it would be a complete waste of time to carry out an assessment on us because as soon as our file went to the field social workers (the people who eventually decide which children should go to which families), it would be thrown out because one of the couple is disabled.

They said disabled people would come into the category of "hard to approve adoptive parents".

The social worker told us that this category also includes homosexuals and transvestites. "Hard to approve" prospective parents would be encouraged to take on a disabled child because these are also the "hard to place" children.

Basically, what we were told in so many words was that the "misfits" of the world would be better off adopting the "misfit" children of the world that nobody else wants.

I find this outrageous. They try to say they have the children's best interests at heart, but how can this be true when they automatically decide that a non-disabled child would suffer with a disabled parent, and a disabled child would be better off with parents who have been rejected by society?

Surely what is most important is that the child be matched with the most suitable parent. The issue of disability should not come into it.

I would very much like to hear from other readers who have experienced the same discrimination. There must be something we can do to change these ludicrous and unfair rules.

Julie Atkins
Stockton on Tees
Send your letters to DN and we will send them on - Editor.

The future of *DN*

Editor, Mary Wilkinson, writes: Disability magazines come and go rapidly, particularly commercial ones.

There is nothing like a large market - 6.2 million disabled people, 6.5 million carers - to make the £ signs flash up before a publisher's eyes. So the magazine is launched, and six months later it hits the rocks. Many potential subscribers, the publisher realises too late, are unemployed and have limited disposable income.

DN, as you know, has been around a long time. It went on subscription in 1987 and launched into the newstrade and Sainsbury this time last year. The number of pages increased, staff increased, free copies sent to disabled people on low income increased. Advertising income has grown an average of 7 per cent a year over the last five years.

DN has won awards: charity publication of the year at the Periodical Publisher Awards 1994 (the first time that category was included) and a quality award from Scope.

What many of you don't know, as we found in our recent focus meetings, is that *DN* has never broken even. It receives an annual subsidy from its publisher, Scope. For 1996-7, that will be about £56,000 on a turnover of £455,000.

Scope itself has been running at a deficit and is determined to move into surplus, so the

pressure is on for *DN* to break even, or better. At the same time, Scope remains committed to *DN* and recognises its value to many disabled people and those close to them.

We shall be doing all we can with the help of corporate fundraising and sponsorship but, having shared the facts with you, I want to ask for your support.

We have decided to raise the price of *DN* from this issue. (The last price rise was in 1994.)

If you are a disabled person on income support or jobseekers' allowance, you will still have *DN* sent free. If you are a paying subscriber receiving *DN* at your home address, we are asking you to pay an extra £2 a year (£16), which just covers the cost of producing *DN*. And if you receive *DN* through your organisation, the price will be £25 a year, to help us offset the cost of the free copies. The retail cover price is now £1.60 a copy.

In return, we want to give you a better newspaper. That is why we ran the reader survey, to which nearly 1,300 of you responded, and the focus meetings in London and Manchester. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Survey results

The readership of *DN* turned out to be very diverse - people with all sorts of disabilities, parents, carers and professionals - slightly more women than men, most frequently aged 35-54. 60 per cent described themselves as "disabled person not working". Yet 54 per cent were owner/occupiers and 61 per cent owned a car.

Over 60 per cent of you found *DN* "very useful" and a similar number read it "thoroughly", predominantly to keep yourself or your family up-to-date with disability affairs and to feel part of the disability movement.

You found *DN*'s news most interesting, followed by health

news, product/equipment features and general features like holidays. You wanted more readers to contribute to *DN*, swapping advice and experiences (so please send them to us), more investigations and campaigning, more in-depth features on employment, more *Which?*-type equipment features, and more colour and cheerfulness.

Advertisements were sometimes criticised for being too prominent (at the focus meetings too). Don't forget we need them to survive and they also reflect the advertisers' opinion of *DN* as a good way to reach customers.

Focus meetings

The cross-section of readers at the focus meetings looked at these findings in more depth.

DN came out as being liked and respected - for information that could not be found elsewhere, use of colour, the variety of features and items for sale, among other things.

Criticism included the *DN* tape (yes, we plan to expand and improve it), a southern bias (we will try to build up more contributors, but would readers tip us off with stories), "skims over issues" (lack of space perhaps, but we take your point), "holier than thou" (oh dear!).

Some people preferred a magazine format as being easier to hold and likely to appeal to younger readers. (On the other hand, it would be less effective for news.) "Disability" in the title was disliked by some people. We think these need further research before any decision is taken.

That *DN* should be on the Internet was a frequent comment. Our previous site closed, so we have to find money for another.

How should we attract new readers, we asked. "Reader gets reader" was one idea. I pass that on in case you can help. The more readers we have, the stronger *DN* will be.

Bank loan scheme for disabled people

May I say what an excellent discovery I made when I bought *Disability Now* last month. If only I had seen it months ago.

My wife has severe problems with her back and was advised to obtain an orthopaedic bed. We found financial companies and banks won't lend to disabled people. Why not? After all, if you are on Severe Disablement Allowance or Disability Living Allowance, and getting worse, surely a guaranteed monthly income would be acceptable?

Would it be feasible for a bank or similar institution to organise a loan scheme for disabled people and their carers only? What do others think?
John Cobbledick
Buckie, Banffshire
DN/RICA would like to hear of readers' experiences - Editor



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Accessible adventures

In the first of three holiday features, *DN* travels to Italy and Siberia. Here, Jane Dunford finds a break that could change your life.

It's not often that a holiday can be called life-changing. Relaxing, exciting, disastrous and a host of other adjectives perhaps... but life-changing?

Yet these were words used by a group leader to describe the effect of a break at an activity centre in Cornwall.

The Scope-run Churchtown Outdoor Adventure Centre, set in beautiful rolling countryside in Lanlivery, just a few miles from the sea, offers disabled people of all ages a holiday with a difference.

Wheelchair-abseiling, water skiing, canoeing and sailing are just a few of the pursuits which adults and children learn to do.

"Some of the results are staggering, truly life-changing," said Brian Middleton, of Reading Rotary Club, who plans to take a group of children to the centre for the sixth year running. "One girl, who is blind, had no confidence and hardly spoke before she went but was the life and soul of the group afterwards. She now organises country and western evenings. The change in her self-confidence is amazing."

Alongside outdoor activities, calmer hours are passed doing photography, painting, puppet

making, playing with the farm's animals, or – for the adults – relaxing in local village pubs.

"I've been there twice and thoroughly enjoyed it," said Roger Baker, who is blind and has cerebral palsy (cp). "The staff were marvellous and I met a lot of people."

The centre, which celebrates its 21st birthday in June, began life as a farm. Now more than 1,500 people a year visit the premises which boast twin bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and a new covered activity and conference area.

"What people do here is undoubtedly fun, but the underlying aim is for everyone to leave having learnt something about themselves and improved their self-confidence," said director David Owens.

"It's amazing to see people achieve things that they never felt were possible."

A professional team of staff work throughout the year to give groups and individuals week-long or weekend breaks.

From the end of February, Churchtown, which is set to become independent in the near future, will also be offering respite care as a registered care home. And at Easter it is running a new adventure course led by Dave Bennett, an experienced leisure recreation adviser who has cp.

Tel: (01208) 872148.



Churchtown challenge: activities at the centre range from boating to snake charming – all in the beautiful Cornish countryside

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All meals are included. But if you need a carer, they must come along as the second prize winner. The holiday can be taken any time apart from August.

To enter, fill in the form on the right and return it to: *DN* offer, Churchtown, Lanlivery, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 5BT.

Closing date: 2 February 1997.

Offer not open to *DN* staff or associates.

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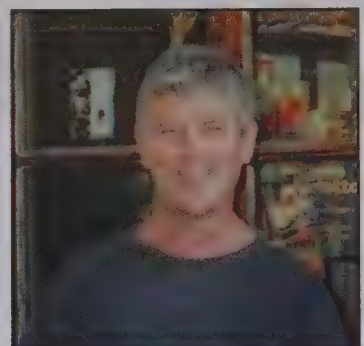
Hazelwoods specialises in carer accompanied holidays for disabled tourists either alone or with their families, giving total care 24 hours per day. Villa rental without carers also available.

Call for information and video loan (01706) 827840.

The taxi driver who picked us up from the airport hated this place. He threw our luggage off the roof rack, shouted "Arriverderchi Lucca" and roared off.

We blinked at the empty Piazza S. Martino sparkling in bright October sunshine, like passengers set down by a stage coach in a spaghetti Western ghost town.

As we bumped the wheelchair over the cobbles under the facade of the white 11th century cathedral, we celebrated our arrival in this pre-Roman



Holidaymaker Ian Feely

town, which lies 16km from Pisa and 46km from Florence. Lucca is surrounded by a vast wall 7 metres high and as wide



Mary finds Battistero antiques market accessible

A go

lan and Mary Feely's wheelchair was as w

as a football pitch. It was built to repel enemy armies and has also defeated that scourge of modern towns - the car.

As Mary's wheelchair sped peacefully into Via Battistero we passed pedestrians but no cars, no fumes, no taxis - hence our Pisan driver's contempt. Our apartment was right in the heart of this beautiful and timeless old town where pedestrians, bikes and wheelchairs flourish.

We chose Lucca for its policy of accessibility for all. Like many of the six million disabled people in Britain, we wanted a centre where we could walk a bit but also use a wheelchair to get around.

The town's tourist office was informative and friendly. Its unique new *Green Guide* has a wonderfully stimulating route designed for less mobile visitors. It lists dozens of bars, cafes and restaurants, 30 historic churches, 15 palaces, scores of shops, three cinemas, one theatre and several banks and markets where access is easy. Unfortunately, Lucca has no toilets for disabled people, but the bars suffice.

This radical guide states that the removal of architectural barriers to disabled people is

Spain - Fully adapted ground floor holiday apartments in the Mojacar area of south east Spain. 2 Bedrooms, shared pool, close to beach and town. Sunny, relaxing, pleasant holiday area. Please write or phone: **RAYMAR, Unit 1, Fairview Estate, Reading Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 1HE.** Tel: 01491 578446.

The Lyneal Trust (Reg. Charity) provides canal and canalside holidays in Shropshire on two specially built canal boats with ramps, hydraulic lift and steering. Facilities also include canalside accommodation for up to 16 people. Day trips on canal also available. Telephone: 01588 638234.

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There is always a warm welcome at Bryn Meirion Winner of Wales Tourist Board Best Small Tourism Business Award 1992 and the 1992 and 1994 Holiday Care Service Award.

Cornwall: The Lizard Peninsula: Spacious 6 bed luxurious barn conversion in an area of outstanding natural beauty, Tourist Board approved for accessibility category 2 (wheelchair user with helper) 3 keys, centrally heated, dishwasher, colour TV, video. Apply Classic Cottages Tel: 01326 565656.


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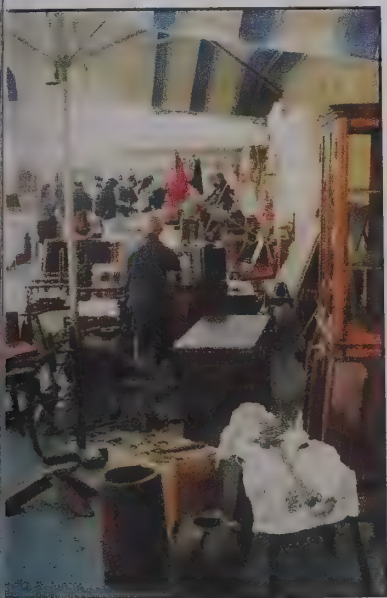
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Good Italian job

Lucca in Tuscany and found Mary's
ne as they were in the friendly, frantic town

only objective.
r intention has been to create an
ness in citizens, because it is not
ent just to destroy architectural
rs if we do not destroy the men-
d cultural ones as well."
m is to "render the city and its
es accessible and thereby give cit-
with physical or sensory disad-
ges dignity and independence".
a has architecture and piazzas of
site perfection. The Lucchese
this a backdrop for their rich and
le lifestyle. We came to admire
churches and piazzas, but we
l and fell in love with their
zz which makes disability irrele-



S.Martino

Early each morning the
action began on Via S. Lucia,
along the specially designated
route where our wheelchair is
on equal terms with the bikes
and pedestrians. No steep
kerbs to negotiate and no
pavements for the wheelchair
to block.

Tuscan food and wine are
divine so their shops are
shrines and the passion in them
intense.

We surged into the brightly-lit
Panificio A.Giusti Dianda &
Rugani. Inside the packed bak-
ery it was pandemonium – the
delicious smell of hot, fresh
bread lent urgency to the push-
ing and shoving.

Behind the long glass counter
piled high with every possible
type of loaf, were six raucous
white-suited, white-hatted bak-
ers. They served quickly, and
noisily. "Push! Push! This is
war!" shouted one baker when
the ferocious old ladies tried to
heave aside the short skirted
models who in turn elbowed
aside the arrogant men in
Armani suits and Gucci shoes.

No one in Lucca has such a
bit part in the great theatre of
life that they can possibly
queue, so each day began with
this effervescent cocktail of
bread, banter and bargaining.

Just off Via Fillungio,
sparkling with its high fashion
shops and ancient jewellers,
was a chaotic and even more
theatrical delicatessen presided
over by a spiderish grocer.

His ceiling creaked with huge,
hanging Parmesan hams. There
were gigantic cheeses piled
against dozens of dark red
wines from remote Tuscan
vineyards; bowls of green and
black and brown olives shim-
mered in oils drenched in pep-
pers and chillis.

There was fresh tagliatelle,
ropes of spaghetti, fresh
squares of ravioli, bowls of
fresh pasta, amatraciana. and
pomodoro. We were served
with boisterous energy by the
grocer who delivered an expert
lecture whilst scampering high
up to the ceiling among his
hams and salted cod.

We rolled homewards past
the church of San. Michele
with the wheelchair creaking
under the huge load.

The discreet care with which
the Lucchese have made their
historic churches accessible is a
benchmark in good planning
for all other cities.

Access to bars and cafes in
Lucca is outstanding too.
There are ramps at nearly
every entrance which teem
with life from dawn until mid-
night. Most stylish is Cafe
Simo with chandeliers, chess



Picturesque view from the Torre Guinghi tower

tables and chocolate cakes as
rich as rum. And we were
grateful more than once that
you don't get breathalised in a
wheelchair!

One of the most enchanting
city walks in the world is on
the wall surrounding Lucca. At
each of twelve enormous bas-
tions there is a gentle slope to
the top providing access for
bikes and wheelchairs. In the
nineteenth century the archi-
tect Lorelizo Nottolini con-
verted the ancient walls into a

wooded park.

Each day we joined the
throng circling the walls.

The guide concludes with the
objective that "Lucca might

Factfile

A return flight cost £199
The Feelys stayed in an apart-
ment for two weeks, costing
£600. Vacanze In Italia, tel:
(01798) 869426
Lucca Tourist Board, tel: 00
39 583 419689

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Care in the air?

Going abroad might be quickest by plane. But does flying mean travel hassle at new heights? Jane Dunford finds out.

Thousands of disabled passengers fly abroad every year – Heathrow airport alone sees half a million wheelchair users annually – and trips usually run smoothly if you tell the airline your needs in advance.

In the UK each airport authority and individual airlines have shared responsibility for disabled travellers, but facilities differ from airport to airport and airline to airline.

"With airports there are two contrasting problems," said John Stanford, travel writer for the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR). "Larger ones have long distances between car

parks, check-in and departure, and wheelchairs or buggies may be needed, but the advantage is they usually have step-free jetways to board planes.

"At regional airports there is less distance to cover but lifts are used onto planes and sometimes you have to be carried up the steps.

"It all depends on what people want."

Stansted airport offers the best of both worlds. It is relatively small and has jetways for boarding. Cardiff airport has a new, £60,000 ambulift to make boarding easier.

Most British airports publish

a passenger guide which includes information for disabled people. Heathrow has a booklet specifically for people with special needs, tel: (01233) 211207. Porters can be booked in advance by travel agents worldwide.

Most airports have facilities for deaf and visually impaired passengers. The Royal National Institute for the Blind and British Airways produce a free cassette with general tips on air travel, tel: 0171-388 1266.

Access to the Skies, a RADAR guide to what individual airlines offer, from low-level check-ins to assistance for blind travellers, costs £5. Tel: 0171-250 3222.

Larger airlines are more aware of disabled travellers' needs. Seasoned traveller Lin Berwick, who is blind and has cerebral palsy, recommends Virgin for the extra leg-room.

Smaller companies like Ryan Air offer cheap flights but may charge for assistance depending on the flight and airport - ask your travel agent.

Make sure you carry any necessary medication in hand luggage in case of delays. And remember, aeroplane toilets are small; you may want to think about alternatives such as catheters. *Flying High* by the



Flying abroad isn't always plane sailing

BAA

Disabled Living Foundation is helpful, tel: 0171-289 6111.

Wheelchairs are stored in the hold during the flight. Batteries must be disconnected. Airline rules on storage vary – contact them in advance for details.

What happens at the other end of your journey? Standards differ enormously in Europe, although recommendations on good practice, from the design of airports to the training of security staff, have been drawn up by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC).

"The recommendations are there," said Ann Frye, chairwoman of the ECAC subgroup on the Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility.

"Our task now is to get Member states to comply. At the moment the guidelines are voluntary. Ask your travel agent what to expect before you go."

Travel tips

- Give details of special needs as early as possible to the airline. Check-in early.
- Check whether or not you can fly unaccompanied and ensure you have necessary medical clearance (ask airline).
- Check parking facilities and travel to the airport. Cars cannot be left unattended while you are dropped off for security reasons.
- If you have difficulty using small toilet cubicles, do not drink excessively, but be careful of dehydration. Test new appliances before flying.
- Wheelchair users should remove all removable parts of the chair and take them as hand luggage.

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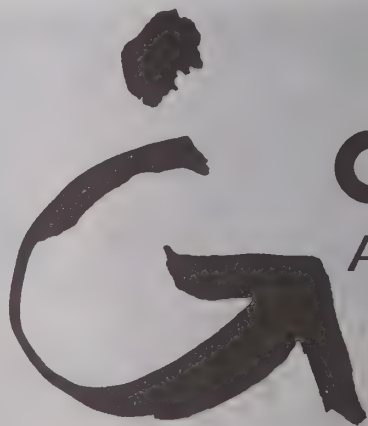
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offers self catering holiday accommodation in an attractive and recently refurbished specially adapted house in the south Shropshire countryside. The accommodation is suitable for families and groups of up to 24 people. The nightly charges are £7.50 per person. For further information telephone: 01588 638234.

Flying in the face of reason

Alan Lewin takes a long-haul flight and finds airlines need to do some plane thinking

What do the hotel, airlines and the travel industry think the word disabled means? Do they really think we come standard, ordered by the same person who said we should not grow curved cucumbers? Do they really have a notion of what they can put us through?

Do they even know how to cope or even cater for us once we are in their care?

When I booked my trip to Australia via Asia with a return via the US, I was advised by a colleague to tell the reservation clerk I had a disability.

I'm a 6ft 3in amputee and with the best will in the world I cannot fold up obligingly to fit in economy class. But with a job that cannot absorb the cost of business or first class travel, economy it had to be.

"Tell them," said my well meaning colleague. "Who knows, they might upgrade you." So I did.

The response was: "We can't have an amputee in a seat where their limbs are going to be a hazard to other passengers and we can't give you a seat near an exit either. Against regulations," said the toneless clerk at the check-in desk.

Anxiety number one. Where the hell were they going to seat me? On the flight deck, in an overhead locker?

"Will you need help with loading?" asked the bored clerk. Loading! Good God. Am I to be loaded? Was this the solution to my seating problem? Would I go freight, tucked in between the frozen



Well travelled: Alan Lewin
PAUL WOLFORD

lavatory deposits and the plane's under-carriage?

"Left or right leg?" asked the clerk, now curious due to my delayed response.

"Why do you need to know that?" I queried, not sure whether this would determine which wheel I would straddle or whether the airline might be planning to even me up with another truncation.

"Is this relevant?" I whimpered.

"Oh yes sir. We need to know what aisle seat to put you in and which limb will be sticking out."

At that moment I had a mental picture of two or three well tanked English football players all trying to clamber over me to get to the toilets and

being run over by the drinks trolley.

"Right. They will try to fit you in somewhere sir, but they won't allocate a seat until you check in." Now I had a mental picture of a giant shoe horn prising me into a seat out of all proportion to my needs.

Was it a conspiracy or an airline perversion on my outward journey that ordained the nearest loo to my seat would have a bulkhead locker sloping like a 14th Century Kent cottage attic?

On the return journey I asked myself why there couldn't be a toilet with braille lettering on the taps to indicate which is hot or cold water, braille lettering to indicate which side the toilet roll is, where the flush button is and to explain why, when pressed, it sounds as though you have just opened a pressure-sealed hatch. Not a nice thought when seated and blind.

I would ask why amputees, who rejoice in the use of modern prosthetics and are spenders and travellers, are made to feel they are a problem, upsetting the seating and trolley arrangements.

Why do some airlines have differing policies on where they can and can't be seated as well as varying procedures on how we are to be loaded?

Some take wheelchair users off the plane first while others make you wait until last.

Some gather up all wheelchair users in a bunch at



Will you get to Bondi Beach in comfort? AUSTRALIAN TOURIST COMMISSION

airports and put you like a pack of luggage wagons in a special bay, implying that you might upset the other passengers.

There you all sit in deep utility wheelchairs with luggage and jacket on a heap on your lap. The pile is so high you cannot see who's trying to talk to you.

Come on someone. Design an airport wheelchair that doesn't fold you inside in a near foetal position where you have a choice of arms pinned or protruding.

Give disabled people the dignity of being able to hand in their own documentation in answer to immigration questions usually put to the wheelchair pusher as though

we are total idiots.

Give us the opportunity of meandering through the lush pastures of duty free shops to graze where the real bargains are...to behave like our able bodied brethren and not be rushed through by airport staff as though we are in a Grand Prix.

Allow us the dignity of going to the loo in an airport without the wheelchair pusher asking "have you finished yet?" every two minutes.

Maybe then we would have the confidence and assurance for our journey to become a pleasant one and we might come back for a second helping.

Help is at hand, see page 18.

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with excellent ground floor facilities for wheelchair users. Resident English owner. For brochure contact **Peter Davies, 94 Church Road, Stretton, Burton upon Trent DE13 0HE.** Tel: (01283) 543743.

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North York Moors National Park, Moonpenny Cottage, Levisham, nr Pickering. Self catering cottage – sleeps 4. Fully equipped to a very high standard and designed specifically to accommodate the wheelchair user as well as the able bodied. Large sitting/dining room with open fire, kitchen, shower room, one double bedroom, one twin-bedded room, south facing and overlooking paddock and hills beyond.
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Sent to Siberia

Daphne Mackie cruised through a trip to Russia's frozen country



The steps onto the Euroflot plane at St Petersburg were intimidating. I asked for help.

A hefty porter arrived, picked me up in a fireman's lift, and carried me like a sack of potatoes. Russia is primitive, but the Russians have ways of doing things.

My husband and I had been offered £400 off a cruise up the Siberian Yenisei River. It was a last minute holiday. When we got the details four days before leaving, they said "Not suitable for disabled travellers." But I don't need a wheelchair all the time, so we went anyway. It

carried the wheelchair while I clung to the handrail. Hundreds of people were trying to get through. It took us two hours.

Then we flew to Norilsk by Krasair, an internal airline. We were given a bag of sandwiches for our supper. The plane was old and uncomfortable but the loos were clean. We landed at an old military airfield, where our "luxury coaches" were waiting to take us to Dudinka.

The coaches were uncomfortable buses. We drove for an hour and a half over swampy Tundra covered with pools of ice. The climate was like autumn in England.

Our ship was called the

with wooden houses and unmade roads. They are built on top of the river bank, safe from floods and are reached by rickety wooden steps.

Sometimes there was no jetty. You had to climb down the ship using handholds and were ferried ashore by lifeboats.

"The sailors will help you down", I was told. But I had visions of being pulled out of the icy water with a boat hook. I couldn't go ashore at those places, but I had been warned.

When the ship was able to put down a gang plank, two sailors helped me ashore.

At Ust Port the best house was the "Orphanage" - a hostel for the children of reindeer herdsman who had taken their reindeer to the Tundra for the summer.

Dogs licked the carcasses of reindeer lying outside a meat factory. Fortunately we weren't given reindeer meat on the ship.

The chef bought most food locally as the villagers sell their produce. Houses had gardens with homemade greenhouses where they grew vegetables. The only sanitation was a privy in the garden. I had a nasty feeling that its contents were used as manure. Fortunately we had had hepatitis jabs.

We also visited the Gulag museum. In the '50s, 22 million people died in the Gulags



Russian riverboat: The Anton Tcheckov

would be an adventure - the chance to see a totally different way of life.

Everything went smoothly at Heathrow. Aeroflot was like any other economy flight. Problems started at Moscow with a long flight of steps to passport control. My husband

Anton Tcheckov. The food was plain but good. Bread was baked on board daily. Our cruise was from Dudinka in the Arctic Circle, 1,500 miles up the Yenisei River to Krasnayorsk, visiting towns and villages on the way.

The villages were primitive



The "orphans" of Ust Port

DAPHNE MACKIE

working on the Polar railway.

Further up the river, the Tundra turned to forest. There were still wild flowers, but the birds had migrated south.

On the last day we were woken at 3am for the long ride to the airport. Although the cruise wasn't really suitable, I'm glad I went. It was so interesting.

Factfile

Jules Verne Cruises, tel: 0181-616 1000. Prices from £1,295. Insurance, visas, airport taxes and tips not included. Drinks are expensive. Georgian wine is £11 a bottle. A gin and tonic costs £4.



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DN shows you how to look and feel good for the new year. First, Agnes Fletcher on a seminar to boost your self-esteem.

Help yourself



DN asked me to attend a seminar on self-esteem and health. Were they trying to tell me something?

The "seminar" was a lecture to 300 people by the American social psychiatrist Todd Heatherton.

I learnt from professionals there that much of the subject matter was familiar to them. It was new and intellectually accessible to me.

This was no *Cosmo* self-development course. Nor were there the blame-the-victim attitudes to illness I feared. Heatherton talked about genetics, social pressures and other factors affecting self-esteem and behaviour.

His analysis of the dangers of high self-esteem was interesting. Like most women with fluctuating and moderately low esteem, I'd always thought the idea was to grab as much as you could and then hold on like hell.

Self-esteem seems not to be based on rational criteria. It's not who you are, what you do or what others think of you but your perceptions of those things which affect self-esteem. People with high esteem often think everyone loves them, while those with low self-esteem think the opposite. Both are often wrong.

"Global" self-esteem is your overall sense of worth. It is made up of "specific" components, relating to performance (education, job, intellect), the social and the physical.

Unsurprisingly while some disabled people's self-esteem may be adversely affected by social barriers, others won't be. Some may reject association with a "stigmatised group" to maintain self-esteem; others embrace and celebrate this association; while yet another group internalises oppression to such an extent that they believe the stereotypes.

Those with very high self-esteem attribute good things in their lives to their own unique qualities, while bad things are always someone else's fault.

Those with low self-esteem take the credit only for bad things and think good things come from elsewhere.

Maybe the reason that the social model has helped so many regain self-esteem is because it restores a balance between these extremes: external barriers are often (though not always) to blame for failure; we have unique and positive qualities which can contribute to success.

If you have low self-esteem you may be aware of it – but can you do anything about it? Well, Heatherton gave some suggestions of the set realistic goals, try out the things you fear, tell yourself you can do it type. He also mentioned, most positively I felt, "cognitive behaviour therapy".

Is change possible? Well, my high self-esteem persona says "Of course, change is easy. I can do it – but then again I don't need to change," while my low self-esteem persona says "Of course change is easy – for everyone else!"



No pain, no gain

Weight training can build your body and your confidence, says David Windridge

When I was told I had Multiple Sclerosis (MS) I was gripped by the fear that my muscles would weaken until I wouldn't be able to support my weight. Imagine my joy at making progress in the opposite direction. Soon after starting a self-devised weight training programme at my local gym in Colchester I found I was getting stronger.

Physically, the effects are immediate and dramatic. Lack of energy and incentive are dispelled and energy returns in between training sessions.

The body's metabolism is directly stimulated. This is

particularly noticeable in the respiratory system. Respiratory problems associated with atrophied respiratory muscles have always been associated with the later stages of MS.

Psychologically, weight training is also impressive. You soon become stronger and this creates a sense of real achievement and well-being. Posture and self-image are also improved with every session.

The quality of the movement should be emphasised. Control and a smooth, steady contraction and relaxation is good for the equipment and

performer alike. But there is no point persisting with the low-quality movements induced by fatigue. Listen to your body. Don't run yourself into relapse. Often by conceding a battle the war may be more easily won.

A high protein diet is essential for providing the raw materials for building. According to the latest evidence, people with MS are constantly battling to repair their bodies but the pace of damage can outstrip the efforts. The least I can do is pass my body the ammunition for the fight. By making physical demands of it, just beyond what it finds it can easily cope with, I am harnessing one of the miracles of nature.

I am not suggesting that everyone with MS is lucky enough to be able to follow a substantial training routine, but there are real gains to be made, no matter how small they may be. There is an incremental benefit to be had which represents a fight back, with all its psychological benefits.

I have also remained free from some of the less pleasant aspects of my disability. Waking in the early hours of the morning with excruciating calf muscle cramp was banished after I started training with heavy weights on the leg-press machine.

Weight-training should be considered a powerful self-help therapy. Demand of your body and your body will deliver.

While appreciating the futility of fretting about my disability, I am free to engage in the very real, measurable and challenging activity of pulling weights, in the sure knowledge that not only am I in control of the activity but also of the outcome.

British Weightlifting Association for the Disabled, tel: (01788) 814290

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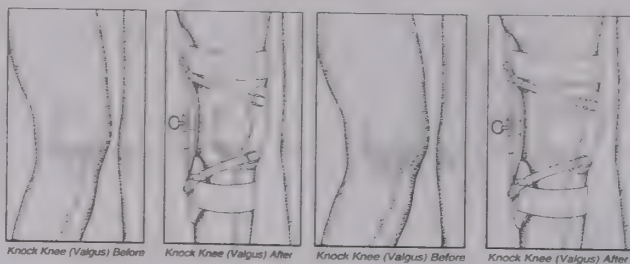
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The man behind the mask

Dan Batten faces up to male beauty treatments

"Dan, we want you to go and have a facial," said Hayley. I responded with macho mock disgust.

So, DN's editorial assistant headed for Hammersmith with this uncertain he-man in tow, to The Green Room, situated at the rear of The Body Shop.

"There are 11 Green Rooms in and around London," said Tina Sweeney, the brave lass who was going to attempt to stimulate and cleanse my soiled North London pores. "But none outside, although we are planning to expand. We are owned by a franchise of eight Body Shops in London. This salon has four rooms, and is extremely busy. Generally a week's notice is required for an appointment."

"It is becoming increasingly popular with men. They are generally rather apprehensive on their first visit. Scalp and shoulder massages are popular." I can vouch for the shoulder massage – bliss.

Before Tina could begin my Six Million Dollar Man-style transformation, I had to have a brief consultation. This involved questions about health, allergies to products, diet and so on. I said my diet was fine, neglecting to inform Tina of the several pints downed in readiness for my trip, or the enormous slab of processed junk I was planning to eat after the treatment *en route* to a gig.

After these preliminaries, it was time to take to the table for my 45-minute Facial for Men.

£100 worth of vouchers to be won

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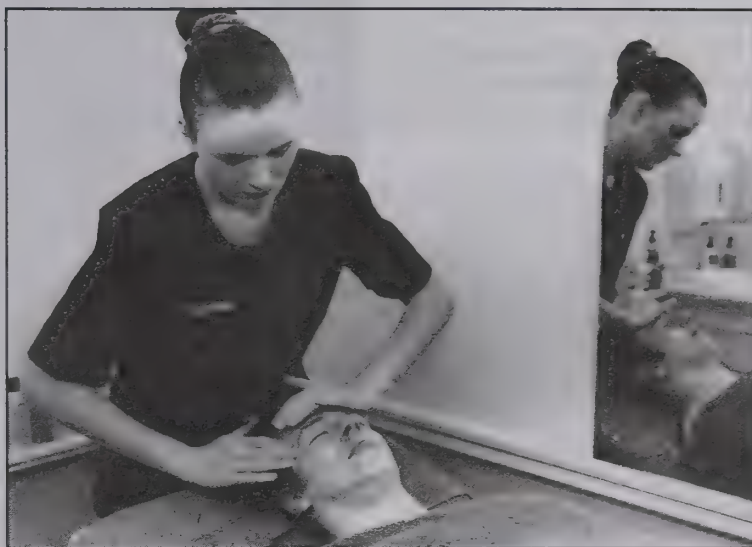
We've got five vouchers to give away worth £20 each.

They can be redeemed against treatments or products from the branches of the Body Shop where The Green Rooms are located.

Send your name and address to: Green Room Offer, *Disability Now*, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.

THE GREEN ROOM

Face & Body Treatments



Dan dares: (Top, left to right) cleansing and steaming. (Bottom, left to right) Out damn spot – Tina gets to work on Dan's blackheads, and a blue corn mask revitalises his "soiled North London pores".

JAMIE FACER

(Prices start at £21).

"You can have the treatment just as effectively sitting upright, so wheelchair users can enjoy the same degree of

comfort," said Tina, as she applied the first of many lotions and potions to Batten's horror mask. The cream was then removed, and I was subjected to

a ten-minute steam which made me sweat from pores I didn't know existed. The reason for this miniature funeral pyre? To enable Tina to extract my

blackheads! Charming.

Not content with that, she also decided my eyebrows needed plucking. Mum, where are you? Then I had that ultimate accessory applied – the face mask, plus cotton wool patches over the eyes. "Wot, no cucumber?" I exclaimed. Tina's expression said it all. Oh dear, only the fifth time she'd heard that one today.

The mask was a blue corn variety, and was left on for about ten minutes. Unlike the mask a university pal once left on me, this was soft and pliable and in no way resembled my friend's DIY embalming kit.

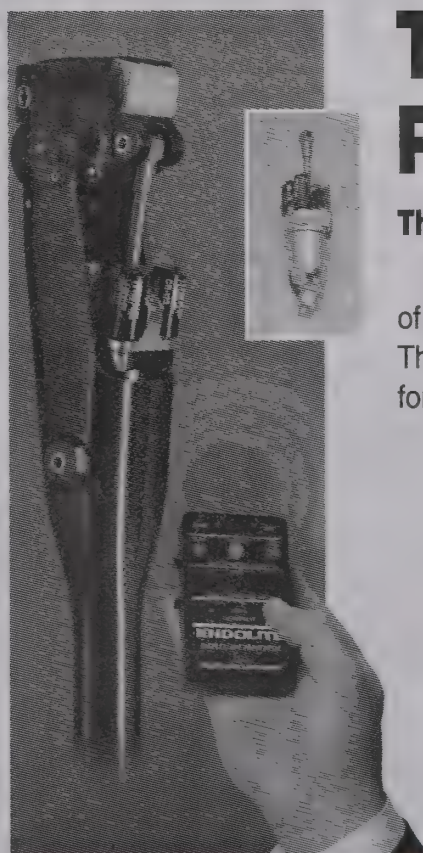
When the mask was removed a new Dan emerged, feeling fresh-faced and revitalised. A touch of lip balm, moisturiser with primrose oil for shaving burns inflicted upon me by my barber colleague at work, and there I was – a new man.

But how long would I feel this good for?

"It's a good idea to have one every four to six weeks," said Tina. "But no more frequently as it will damage the skin."

I'm a convert to the cause now, and with gift vouchers available, I know what I'll be asking for on my birthday. Go on lads, it's great. Now Tina, when can you fit me in next?

Green Room Hammersmith, tel: 0181-748 7675



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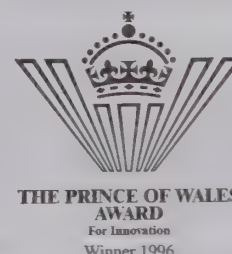
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ENDOLITE

Exhibition

Art work

"People here decide what they want to do," says Ellie Beedham, who runs the Studio Project in a church in Battersea.

This is the ethos behind the project which was set up to help artists with learning disabilities who want to turn professional.

They are encouraged to try different methods of working and develop skills in the art form they like best.

The studio was opened to the public in November.

Some of the artists have sold work, including Adora

Ichuwuku who paints huge canvases with splashes of vibrant colour.

Ian Hiscutt works alongside non-disabled artist Lesley Osbiston who has shown him how to weave.

"As Ian is visually impaired he likes to use different textures," she said.

"I like weaving," said Ian "I want to make a big coat next. Like Joseph's."

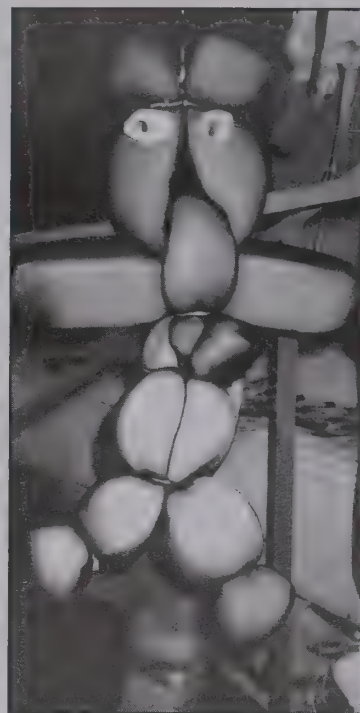
The group are going from strength to strength with experiments in ceramics and sculpture planned. And they're always looking for buyers...

Alison Miller

Tel: 0171-627 8855



Portrait of the artist: Adora Ichuwuku with one of her canvases



Experimental ideas: the artists work with different media

Film

Michael Turner

I'm not able to review the film with most disabled characters in 1996, as *Crash* has been banned.



One disabled commentator who has seen the film suggested that the censors' don't like sex scenes between disabled people. Not surprisingly, there are quite a few of these in a film about people who get sexual pleasure from car crashes, adding a new meaning to the term "Orange Badge Abuse".

This leaves *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, which the censors would have been quite welcome to ban.

It seems you can achieve anything with genetic engineering. In this film director John Frankenheimer puts together HG Wells' classic novel, the legendary Marlon Brando and heart throb Val Kilmer, and comes up with a real turkey.

Wells' tale of a scientist creating human-animal hybrids is updated. Here, genetics are used in Moreau's quest to eradicate the evil urges in man and create a moral master race.

At one point Moreau suggests that it has been worth making the creatures for their moral purity, even if their appearance is "horrific".

But the good behaviour of the animals is merely produced by traditional methods of taming. Things go wrong, the hybrids rebel and Moreau is killed.

Good make up and performances make the creatures quite disturbing. But at times the film is little more than a freak show, and disabled actors seem to have been exploited. Several animals appear to be played by actual disabled people, although it is difficult to tell what is real.

The film offers little more than obvious ponderings about the animal instincts that dominate our behaviour. The morality of Moreau's attempt to manufacture a moral master race is given no consideration. But, as the rest of the film is such a mess, this is probably just as well.

Video top five

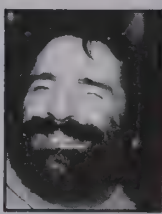
1. **COPYCAT** (Warner): Psychological thriller with Holly Hunter and Sigourney Weaver.
2. **EXECUTIVE DECISION** (Warner): Action adventure.
3. **KINGPIN** (EV): These films just get dumber and dumber.
4. **MONEY TRAIN** (20/20 Vision): Woody Harrelson and Wesley Snipes go off the rails.
5. **BROKEN ARROW** (Fox Guild): John Travolta and Christian Slater are on target for another hit.

Chart supplied by MIRB

Television

Chris Davies

In the old *Late Show* slot, BBC2 is trying different formats, the latest being head-to-head debate, *A Room*



with Two Views. The subject of the programme on 3 Dec was euthanasia. Showing a touch of originality, they chose Annie Lindsell, who has the life-threatening motor neurone disease, to advocate voluntary death.

I wish someone would realise there are quite a number of us who do not have a life-threatening condition, are content with the quality of life and don't view our state of being as inherently tragic.

Channel 4's warts-and-all travel programme *The Real Holiday Show* (18 November) showed wheelchair user Jean Pollock in Turkey. With her emphasis on Wonderbras, drinking and men, she was not your average disability activist.

But she was very real. The disability movement should remind itself of people like Jean. It's for her interests that the activists struggle, but if she doesn't identify with the movement, aren't we missing something important?

On 10 December there will be an edition of BBC2's *Lifeline*. Once again tv and charity get together. *Blue Peter* has another appeal (about leprosy). Before Easter we'll have another *Comic Relief Red Nose Day*. Yet, those who lobby against *Children in Need* (BBC2 22 November) will not raise a finger against them.

The One in Eight Group has just given an award for worst non-fiction programme of '95-'96 to *Children in Need*. It is not for want of competition.

Somebody prove to me that disabled kids, just like everyone else, don't have needs which must be fulfilled and I might begin to follow the logic. And if any political party is willing to take over the role of charities, so that providers such as *Children in Need* are unnecessary, I'll be the first to say great.

The BBC will go on making an annual appeal but that's no reason why it shouldn't change. As an advisor who's been working on the programme for the last five years, I am pushing for an alternative approach.

I also know that the British Council of Disabled People is talking to the organisers of the BBC Trust. All I can say is I wish prejudice didn't play a part in people's perception of *Children in Need*. I wonder what Jean Pollock thought of it? Or you? Tell me.



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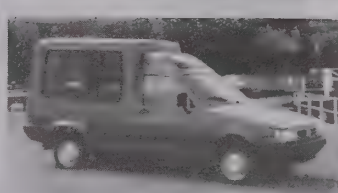
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NO NONSENSE VEHICLE CONVERSIONS

'We match equipment to suitable children'



Debbie Stephens with son Lexy who is settling well at his new school

MICHAEL STEPHENS

Michael Stephens explains how he helps his son and hundreds of other disabled children

Alexander, nicknamed Lexy, was born by caesarean section on 3 May 1988.

I went to see him in special care the next day, and apart from all the tubes and the incubator, he looked so normal, although every now and then he would fit uncontrollably, which was most distressing.

Lexy had had a stable night, but he was still not expected to live. Eight and a half years later, he has been through some rough times and occasionally been at death's door, but he always battles through.

Lexy has cerebral palsy and

needs constant care, as he cannot physically do anything for himself and cannot talk.

He used to be fed orally but when he still weighed 24lb at the age of six, it was decided that it was time for a gastronomy.

He is now a healthy 42lb with plenty of energy, although the extra weight is quite a penalty when trying to handle him.

For many years, his older brother Edward, who is ten, could manage to carry him despite a two year age gap.

Lexy's sudden growth spurt posed another problem. He was quickly outgrowing all of his specialist equipment.

Since the correct equipment, such as chairs or standers to help maintain good posture, is so vital for a disabled child, we tightened our belts and found the funds to buy replacement items.

But not only was it expensive to keep doing this, we also found there was no way to dispose of the old items that were still in good condition.

Talking to parents of other disabled children, my wife Debbie and I realised there were many others in the same boat.

We investigated further and found there was unused specialist equipment in schools, therapy departments, in fact in most places involved with disabled children.

I retired from the air force after eighteen years' service and wanted a new challenge. So Debbie and I decided to take the plunge into self employment and Lexequip was born.

Lexequip is a small business operating from an office at our home in Cirencester. It is dedicated to helping with the problem of surplus specialist

equipment, as well as providing a source of reasonably priced second-hand equipment for people who cannot afford it new.

Parents and schools can subscribe to our national database that details their child's disabilities along with their surplus equipment and equipment needs. From this information we match equipment to children, advise on cost and organise transport if necessary.

We are effectively helping to recycle equipment while helping parents raise funds from old to buy new.

If equipment is in good condition, which it usually is if it is just outgrown, we advise someone to sell it for about half price. This makes for an excellent bargain.

The idea of Lexequip had been with us for the last few years, but we started in earnest two months ago.

The initial response has been excellent and at the moment we look on target to have at least 2,000 individuals on the database by mid-1997. Going by indications, this may even be a conservative estimate.

We are now in the middle of the mammoth task of reaching the parents of all disabled children.

Methods are various. Lexy's own special school, Chamwell in Gloucester, has distributed our brochures to all parents and other organisations are helping out in other areas.

Lexy is thriving at Chamwell, which is a local authority-run school. We moved him from a

private school last term and already Lexy gets upset if he has to miss a day.

The school is very keen on computers and we hope Lexy will become involved with them soon. He loves reading and watching tv, and I think using computers will be very good for him.

Meanwhile, we have a long way to go with the company, but by the time we have covered the whole of the UK we should have a database that will cater for everyone's sales and needs.

We are not a large company looking to make a vast profit from another's disability - we are a husband and wife team who continue to encounter the difficulties and frustrations associated with bringing up a disabled son, and from our experience we want to provide a desperately needed service which we truly believe in.

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Lexy (right) and brother William

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Mr James Putnam
Putnams Orthopaedic Products
Langage
Plympton
Devon PL7 5ET

Dear Mr Putnam,

Last year, at the Naidex '95 exhibition at Wembley, I bought one of your "coccyx" seat cushions. I am delighted to say that it is the best cushion that I have used in 43 years of sitting in a wheelchair. During that time, I have used many types of cushion ranging from rubber rings to specially constructed cushions costing in excess of £200 each but none of them has prevented problems of sores and abscesses on what remains of my buttocks.

I have not suffered a single sore or abscess in the past year and attribute this to the use of your cushion. I was therefore very pleased to find you at the recent Naidex '96 exhibition where I took the opportunity to buy another "coccyx" cushion at a price which was less than one-tenth of the price of many of the specially-designed cushions which are currently available on the market.

I also purchased another of your back-support cushions which I have found very effective in reducing back/shoulder pains over the past year.

Thank you for your efforts in developing these products and I hope you will come up with more excellent ideas in the future.

Your sincerely,

Michael J Wheeler
Dr Michael J Wheeler

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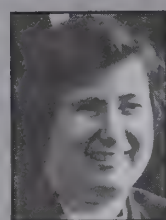


Dear Ann

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- personal problems
- advice and support

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DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick can give disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and fully accredited Methodist local preacher. Talk to her on (01708) 477582 on Thursday afternoons, 1pm-5pm and Mondays 6pm-10pm.



Sponsored by BT

Send your letters to: Ann Darnbrough, *Disability Now*, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ

A strong resolve

It will soon be that time of year when we all make New Year resolutions. I thought I would make mine well in advance and share them with your readers.

I will never, ever, say that being disabled is wonderful.

I will try a course of assertion therapy so that I can face the world and give as good as I get.

I will have sex whenever it is available – even if I have to get drunk first.

I will drop my "polite" mask and say what I think.

I will write and let you know how I am getting on later in the year.

Victoria, Macclesfield

Good on yer!

No disability pride

I would like to write in support of a reader's comment that he could not understand how some disabled people say they are proud to be disabled.

I certainly don't feel this way and find it a nuisance. Disability has affected my life and that of my family. Everything takes so much longer to do and disabled people cannot be as

independent as they like. Life is much more irksome and tiring and we do not have as much scope and freedom as our able-bodied counterparts.

I think that these people who claim to be proud to be disabled do not allow any free debate on the subject because they feel they need to use their own defences to bolster up their views. They feel just as angry as we do but they are too insecure to admit it.

It is one thing to campaign for rights and a better lifestyle for disabled people, but another thing to say that someone with a disability is satisfied with their life and situation. I wish they would stop pretending that disability is wonderful when they know in their own hearts that it is not.

Vivienne, London

I am sure you will have started a lively debate – we should all be discussing these issues without fear of what others will say. While some readers will be shocked by your views, there will certainly be others who agree with you. I look forward to hearing what readers think.

Changing sides

I need to change my automatic car from right to left leg drive. I would like to hear of any problems to look out for from others who have had this done.

Ella, Norfolk

It is certainly important to seek advice before deciding to change the method of driving your car.

You need to be aware that a fundamental change in the way that you operate foot controls is not without danger, and in my view you would be well advised to have training to adapt to the new controls before you take to the road.

You might find it helpful to visit your nearest mobility centre where you can be assessed and receive training, and obtain information about different controls and competent fitters. Banstead Mobility Centre will give readers details of the nearest centre in their locality.

I wonder if you have been in touch with one of the three disabled drivers' organisations? At the same time, you will be put in touch with other local disabled drivers. Membership can be useful because you can always get advice when you need it.

Stress is building

My husband and I are mortgage holders in a nice house. Our problem is that my husband has been unable to work since 1991, due to ill health. My son has learning disabilities, asthma, migraine, a problem with both knees, ME and speech problems.

The mortgage is paid (interest only) by the Department of Social Security. We have done our best to try and pay a bit each month to help out as asked by our lender.

Our problem is that the amounts keep getting raised. We started at £20 a month, then it was £30 a month and now our mortgage has been taken over by the Britannia Building Society, the amount has risen to £50.

We are on Income Support and the only reason we have been able to pay these amounts is because we use our son's Disability Living Allowance. This is unfair on him as he needs this to keep him happy and comfortable. We have been told we would be better off in a council house but that if we stop paying the £50 we will have made ourselves intentionally homeless and will not get a council house.

Can you give us any advice? We've asked everyone else and drawn a blank.

Gladys, Stoke on Trent

I am very sorry to hear this. You need financial and housing specialist advice.

It seems a harsh and unreasonable policy that you cannot consider leaving your house because if you stop making your mortgage payments you will be deemed to have made yourselves intentionally homeless. Unfortunately, the council is acting within its rights. Therefore it is essential that you do not stop payment or hand in your keys to the building society. It is also

important that you answer all letters from them. What you need is someone to negotiate on your behalf. I suggest you contact Shelter, the Housing Aid Centre in Birmingham, which has particular experience of difficult housing situations. You may also consider consulting your MP. I would especially draw the MP's attention to your son's disability and the care you give him, as well as the diminished quality of life he will face in reduced circumstances.

Your local Citizens' Advice Bureau can advise you about your money problems or they may be able to put you in touch with a non-commercial money advice centre. You need to be sure you are getting all the financial benefits to which you are entitled.

Disabled Drivers' Association, Ashwellthorpe, Norwich NR16 1EX, tel: (01508) 489449

Disabled Drivers' Motor Club, Cottingham Way, Thrapston, Northamptonshire NN14 4PL, tel: (01832) 734724

Disabled Motorists' Federation, National Mobility Centre, Unit 2a, Atcham Estate, Shrewsbury SY4 4UG, tel: (01743) 761889

Banstead Mobility Centre, Damson Way, Orchard Hill, Queen Mary's Avenue, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4NR, tel: 0181-770 1151

Shelter Housing Aid Centre, Room 30, 2nd Floor, Ruskin Building, 191 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6RP, tel: 0121-236 6668. Open Monday to Friday 10am-4pm (except Wednesday).

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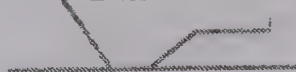
**Ashley House
235-239 High Road
Wood Green
London N22 4HF**

Telephone: 0181-881 7777

Minicom: 0181-881 6764

Facsimile: 0181-889 6395

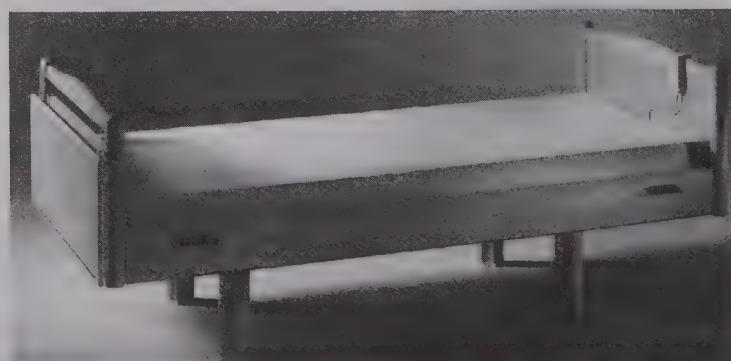
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Promises, promises

Penny Boot resolves to make a difference this year



The first difficulty for me is remembering resolutions. Promises sworn on that tenth

pint of cider, after the twentieth drag on that unusual cigarette during the hazy night before do things to a girl's memory.

And now it's morning and you feel like the first black hole has been found in the human brain. Call Steve Hawking, please. Or better still Fox Mulder from the *X Files*.

My grumpy, unfed cat sits in my wheelchair and has the kind of beady stare usually

associated with dictators annexing Baltic nations.

It is only when I check that the man in my bed is the one I'm expecting – and not some party interloper – that I realise it's New Year's Day!

I grimace as I recall the wild declaiming made in front of witnesses. Available to swear, your honour, that you resolved to...

To what? And why is there a pair of jeans hanging upside down from the end of my wheelchair handles – as if some pervert tried to attire it in his cast-off clothing? Please – I don't want to know.

Despite my flab I refuse dieting resolutions – they never work. Just eat that cake and feel good!

The one vice I could ease up

on is, I feel, unfairly included in the usual catalogue of naughties. It's pleasurable and does no harm to man, woman, or beast (unless you have a very kinky disposition). Remember the words of Oscar Wilde:

"The only thing I cannot resist is temptation." That thought should scupper any resolution leaning towards the puritanical.

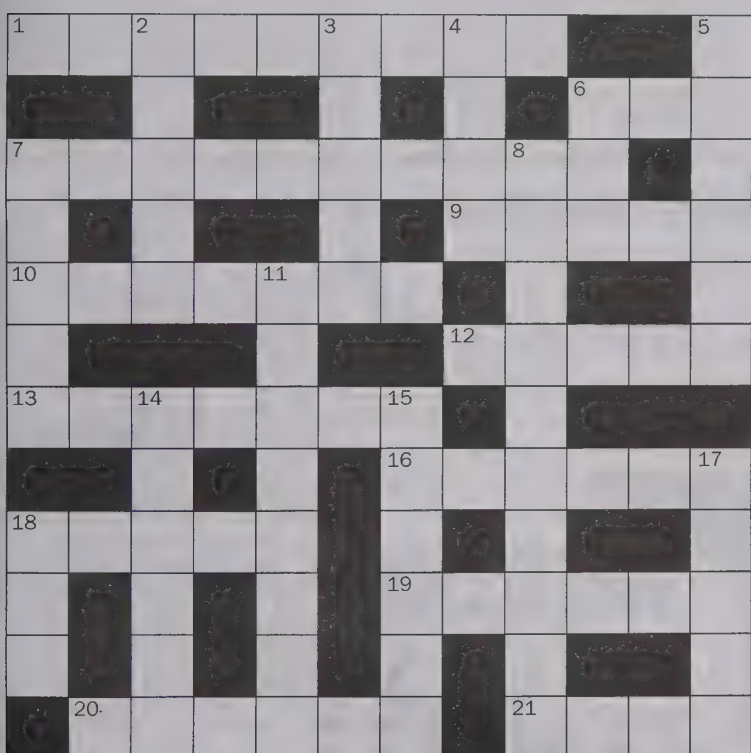
I'll try to keep more noble resolutions. I will go on a demo. I will write to my MP about the rainforests, disabled people's rights, animal cruelty, disabled people's rights, French nuclear testing, disabled people's..."

Methinks a pattern is forming. So my resolution for this year is to act up and kick ass for me and for you by word, by mouth, by deed. You know it makes sense.

DN's crossword

Answers on page 28

COMPILED BY REBECCA REYNOLDS

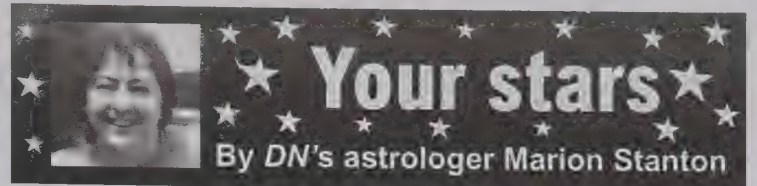


ACROSS

1. Household mobility aid (9)
6. Punctuation mark or name? (3)
- 7, 18 down, 12 across. British patriotic song (4,2,4,3,5)
9. Prickle (5)
10. Wore hen (anag)
12. See 7 across
13. Meet dip (anag)
16. Countrified (6)
18. See 19 across
- 19,18. 1930s female film and comic strip character (6,5)
20. Jovial (6)
21. Shout (4)

DOWN

1. As good ____ (2,3)
3. Long-term prisoner (slang) (5)
4. Measure or part of body (4)
5. Malodorous (6)
6. God (Latin) (3)
7. Sharp movement forward (5)
8. Sly hip hoop (anag)
11. Need vice (anag)
14. Severely reprimand (6)
15. Soft and limp (6)
17. Waterway (5)
18. See 7 across



★ **CAPRICORN** (22 Dec-20 Jan) You feel generous and ready to connect with close ones. But a misunderstanding around the 16th could bring disillusionment. Don't let it get you down. A conjunction between the Sun and Jupiter on the 20th should set you on the right track.

★ **AQUARIUS** (21 Jan-19 Feb) If you feel the urge to break a close family tie mid-month hold your horses. Give yourself time to think through new ideas. After the 24th things should fall into place bringing fresh beginnings without hurting your nearest and dearest.

★ **PISCES** (20 Feb-20 March) January brings an opportunity to relax and make plans for the future. If a little post-Christmas depression clouds your thinking just let it be for a week or two. You can start to activate your ideas from around the 13th.

★ **ARIES** (21 March-20 April) If you have recently entered a relationship, the first flush will be wearing off. It's time to really get to know each other. Self-examination around the 15th gives way to realism as you get down to business on the work front. Try to avoid arguments.

★ **TAURUS** (21 April-21 May) Friends could feel jealous as your attentions turn to one-to-one relationships that don't meet with their approval. There are no easy answers on the work front either. Look out for some good advice from a woman around the 18th.

★ **GEMINI** (22 May-22 June) Conflict in a close relationship could be resolved, or lessened, as Venus leaves your opposite sign on the 11th. An activity will give you more understanding of yourself – perhaps a sports club or a self-help group. A career idea which has been on the back burner could become active.

★ **CANCER** (23 June-23 July) Home life could conflict with your ambitions. The situation is your own doing but you won't see this until the sun moves out of your opposite sign on the 21st. Then you may be able to be more sensitive to others.

★ **LEO** (24 July-23 August) The full moon is in your sign on the 24th bringing a potentially explosive situation. Your energy is on the increase but beware of letting ideas run away with themselves. Try not to act on your emotions. This could leave you with some explaining.

★ **VIRGO** (24 August-23 Sept) Now you can reap the rewards of the efforts of the past few months so let's hope you were putting your energy in the right direction. You should have more time for loved ones from the 11th. Unattached Virgos could be looking at new romance and long-term lovers could renew their vow.

★ **LIBRA** (24 Sept-23 Oct) A burst of energy enables you to further your career prospects. But there could be some backlash in your love life which may suffer as a result of your interest elsewhere.

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Bright ideas

Hayley Kerr finds the best buys of the month

Cumbersome corkscrews can make opening a bottle of wine difficult, especially if you have arthritis in your hands. Help is at hand with Tefal's Automatic Corkscrew Deluxe. Its chunky top makes it easy to turn and means you don't need to pull to remove the cork. It costs £6.49. Contact (01604) 762726.

Boots has produced a no-spill chopping board. It folds up at the sides to help you guide its contents into a pan, and flattens again to serve as a chopping surface. Folding the handle creates a spout for pouring. At £6.49, it's dishwasher safe too.

Also from Boots is a tray which can be carried with one hand, or use the detachable handle to hang it over an arm, leaving your hands free. A non-slip Dycem mat ensures that the things on your tray won't slide about. The tray costs £24.99; for further details on both products tel: 0115-950 6111.

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This portable pillowlift rolls up, so you can take it with you wherever you go.

Send your name and address to: Mangar offer, DN, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ. Closing date: 14 Feb 1996.



He's a chair man



Congratulations to Sidney Willimont from Slough who won a KeepAble armchair worth over £900 in a competition in DN in November. Mark Speed from KeepAble handed over the chair in time for Christmas (left). Mr Willimont, who beat over 400 entries, was delighted to win and is looking forward to a comfortable new year.

Info

There is a new internet site specialising in childhood myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). <http://www.jafc.demon.co.uk/>

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across: 1. Stairlift 6. Dot 7. Land of hope 9. Thorn 10. Nowhere 12. Glory 13. Emptied 16. Rustic 18. Annie 19. Orphan 20. Cheery 21. Yell
Down: 2. As new 3. Lifer 4. Foot 5. Stinky 6. Deo 7. Lunge 8. Philosophy 11. Evidence 14. Punish 15. Droopy 17. Canal 18. And

Corrections

Hemi-Help's video is called *Don't Give Up - Growing Up With Hemiplegia*. Tel: 0181-6723179.

Mike Davies wants to hear from people aware of the difficulties of teaching maths to children with cp. Mike Davies, Advisory Assessment Centre, Scope, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6LP, tel: 0171-387 9571.

Glenn Smith wants to speak to men who have had a chronic illness since childhood/adolescence. Contact him at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, Mile End Road, London E14NW, tel: 0171-987 4612.

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Contact Howard Samuels for a full information pack.
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Motability



What's on

A holiday exhibition for people with disabilities is on 8 January at the Glaxo Neurological Centre in Liverpool. The exhibition will have information about every kind of holiday from skiing to deep sea diving. For more information contact: the Glaxo Neurological Centre, Norton Street, Liverpool L3 8LR, tel: 0151-298 2999.

Risk taking: with special reference to mental disorder services is a one day course for professionals on 15 January at the Park Royal International in Warrington. For further details, contact: Jill Elliott, BS&L Network, Faculty of Law, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, tel: (01703) 592376.

Children Who Need an Augmentative Way of Communicating is a one-day conference on 15 January at the Royal Society of Medicine in London. For details, contact: Lisa Spicer, Academic Administrator, The Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE, tel: 0171-290 2988.

Older Disabled People – a Positive Approach training course on 28 January at The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) in London. The course is for healthcare and social services staff working with disabled people and their carers and costs £40. For details, contact: DLF Training, DLF, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU, tel: 0171-289 6111.

Calling all artists

Respect-Ability is a disability arts exhibition at the Gallery in Stoke Newington organised by the Stoke Newington Arts Project (SNAP) on 13 January-14 February. It will examine people's perceptions of disability and show works by disabled artists. SNAP is inviting people to submit slides or photographs of work. They may be any size in any medium. For details, contact: SNAP, 121 Manor Road, London N16 5PB, tel: 0181-800 6665.

Info

Do you want to get in shape, but can't face strenuous exercise? If so, the *Reluctant Exerciser's Guide* is for you. It shows you how to get fit without jogging round the park or lifting weights. For a free copy, write to: The Reluctant Exerciser's Guide, The Stroke Association, CHSA House, Whitecross Street, London EC1Y 8JJ, tel: 0171-490 7999.

The AA has joined forces with Tripscope, the disability travel organisation, to help improve their services to disabled motorists. Now, they will be able to ensure that all vehicles supplied by an approved operator have facilities for wheelchair users and all drivers are skilled in transporting disabled people.

Keighley Disabled People's Council provides free information and counselling to disabled people, their families and carers. Contact them on tel: (01535) 606700, minicom: (01535) 610061.

Cancerlink is looking for volunteers for its helpline. Contact: Cancerlink, 11-21 Northdown Street, London N1 9BN, tel: 0171-833 2818. Free phone Cancer Information Helpline, tel: (0800) 132905.

GROW is a new vocational information service on the Internet for people who are blind or visually impaired. Funded by the Employment Service and maintained by the Royal National Institute for the Blind it has information on job seeking, careers guidance, special equipment and more. Access it on <http://www.rnib.org.uk/grow/welcome.htm> or use the GROW access points at the RNIB, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1 6AA.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) offers debt counselling by telephone or in person. In some places, visits can be arranged for disabled people. For more information contact your local CAB. You will find its number in the phone book.

Depression in People with a Learning Disability is a leaflet from the Down's Syndrome Association. For a free copy, contact: The Down's Syndrome Association, 155 Mitcham Road, London SW17 9PG, tel: 0181-682 4001.

Planet has a series of seven play leaflets. They explain the importance of play for all children, give information about products that are good for severely disabled people, and more. £3 from Planet, Save the Children, Cambridge House, Cambridge Grove, London W6 0LE, tel: 0181-741 4054.

Personal

INTELLIGENT, CARING, AFFECTIONATE, idealistic man in 30s. Slightly disabled and searching for a special woman up to 37. Ability and nationality of far less import than personality. I am 5ft 10in, own home etc. Box No. 012

MEL GIBSON I'VE told you I'm not interested. I'm looking for someone different. Woman, 40, wheelchair user, many interests, is looking for her own Braveheart. Box No. 013

ANTHONY, 30s, ARTISTIC, sensitive, warm hearted. 6ft tall. Slim, dark hair, hazel green eyes, slight disability. Seeks female friend perhaps blind or visually impaired. I live in London. Box No. 014

SINGLE MALE SCOTLAND. Slightly disabled, 34, secure and independent. Seeks young outlook female for happy, light time together. Photo appreciated. Box No. 015

OPEN-MINDED CARING trainee professional disabled male seeks similar female for fun and frolics. Personality counts first. All letters answered. Varied interests. London only. Box No. 016

LADIES, MATURE YOUNG looking white male, seeks special friendship with lady 25-40 of any nationality from London to Cornwall. I am self-employed and live in the south west area. I am willing to travel to see a caring and reliable lady. I am disabled and walk a little slowly. I have a well-behaved dog, so I hope you like animals. All letters answered. Photo would be nice. Box No. 017

LONELY, EDUCATED LADY (37). Divorced, slight cp (only affects legs). Would like to meet gentleman for friendship, romance and possibly remarriage. Varied hobbies and interests. Would prefer south east Scotland, but would consider elsewhere if gentleman is the right one for me. Box No. 018

34-YEAR-OLD MALE with hydrocephalus seeks adult with a learning difficulty who would like to play football. Box No. 019

MY NAME IS DAVID. Hair brown, eyes brown, stocky build. I like watching videos of Westerns and playing records. I have myotonic dystrophy but I can walk quite well and can do my own cooking and shopping. Would like to hear from someone. Box No. 020

HELLO. YOUNG MAN, 32. Hobbies: sports, computers, caravans and socialising. Would like to meet young lady, 25-40 for friendship. Box No. 021

ACTIVE FEMALE, MID FORTIES, wheelchair user. Would like to meet a man for friendship and company living in the south west of England. Enjoys travelling and socialising. Non smoker. Photo if possible. All letters will be answered. Box No. 022

For sale

STERLING 4 SCOOTER as new. £1,200 ono. Tel: 0113-232 0071.

ESCORT 1.4 LITRE H REG. 14,000 miles. Carchair driver. Light power steering. Hand controls. Servo brake. Electric handbrake and windows. Carchair has electric footplate lift. £7,950. Tel: (01932) 229636 (Surrey).

FOR SALE DUE to bereavement, 1994 Nissan Sunny five door estate 1.6i lx in Arctic white. Only 23,000 miles. Fitted with a powered (in and out) boot hoist worth £500. Offers around £7,000. Also Carters Invacare powered luxury wheelchair with many extras. Hardly used. Offers around £3,000. Tel: (01246) 279619 (Chesterfield).

CRYSLER DODGE GRAND caravan. Metallic green. Gold mag. alloys. Air conditioned. Electric mirrors/windows. Automatic. 35,000 miles. Wheelchair driver conversion. Quick sale. £19,000 ono. Tel: (01709) 324238 (South Yorkshire).

SPA CONTROLLER CHAIR. Symmetrikit. Reclines and adjusts into side lying position. Two sets of removable covers. Suit child. As new £320. Tel: (01225) 766280 (Wilts).

ELECTRIC SCOOTER de luxe. Seat, rain canopy. New £10,596. £1,800 ono. Tel: (01908) 372484 (Milton Keynes).

POIRIER POSITELEC PE50 electric chair with electrically powered jacks to adjust the reclining backrest. Tilting seat and each of the elevating legrests with the fully proportional control joy stick for full independence. Price £2,495 (new price £4,450). Contact Mr John Payne on tel: (01454) 313556.

SUNRISE MEDICAL POWERTEC F50. Indoor and outdoor electric wheelchair with kerb climber. As new. £1,695. New price £3,995. Contact Mr John Payne on tel: (01454) 313556.

SEAT TERRA CHAIRMAN Vista. Rear entry ramp. K reg. White. 8,000 miles. Tax and MOT March '97. £3,800 ono. Tel: (01494) 783016 (Bucks).

TOWN AND COUNTRY BOOSTER. Good condition. Hardly used. Battery charger. Cost £1,800. Accept £850. Tel: (01634) 364852 (Kent).

PARKER KNOLL ELECTRIC recliner. Beige. Used twice. Cost £900. Accept £600 ono. Tel: 0181-202 4769 (London).

FORD ESCORT 1.4 LITRE 1990 G three door hatchback. White. Automatic. 22,000 miles. £3,500. With hand controls. Remploy autobility system. Tel: (01252) 615590 (Hants).

SHOPRIDER. TEN MILE RANGE. Easily dismantles to four pieces. Automatic charger. Hardly used. Cost £1,500 new. £900 ovno. Reason for selling. Saville, 31 West Street, Wrotham, Kent TN15 7AS, tel: (01732) 882658 (Maidstone area).

CHILD'S ADAPTED THREE wheel bike. Five-19 years approx. £325. For further details and photo, tel: 0161-336 7914 (Manchester).

VW TRANSPORTER 2 litre petrol. 58,000 miles. HBC200 lift to side door. Captain's seat. Rear twin seat. Side windows. Wheelchair track and clamps. MOT July '97. Serviced by VW agent. One lady owner. £7,750 ono. Tel: (01726) 850842 (Cornwall).

STERLING 4 ELITE scooter with accessories. Excellent condition. £3,000 when new. £1,500 ono. Tel: (01282) 870484 (Lancs).

ELECTRIC SCOOTER/WHEELCHAIR. Sungift 200. £3,000 new. Hardly used. In perfect condition. £1,500 ono. Call evenings, tel: (01582) 502560 (Luton).

TWO UNUSED ELECTRIC wheelchairs with battery charger. Ready for immediate use. Purchased for loved ones who were never able to use them. Sunrise Medical BEC Horizon serial no. 803563. Also Powertec F40 serial no. 604645. Delivery arranged. Price £1,600 each. Contact Mr Dowson on tel: 0181-906 2211.

TRANSIT VAN. J REG. Adapted for wheelchair driver. Tailgate lift. Available January '97. Tel: 0115-912 4332 (Notts).

SHOPRIDER SUNRUNNER SCOOTER. One year old. Hardly used. Price includes battery charger. £850. Tel: (01444) 247803.

STERLING XL3 THREE-WHEEL scooter. New-condition battery charger. Foot pump. Weather cover. Front light. Shopping basket. Adjustable seat and speed control. Cost £2,185. Selling price £750. Tel: 0171-272 1583 (London).

BEC HORIZON. INTEGRAL head rest, gel batteries, elevated leg rests. Charger. Reclining back. £275 ono. Contact Chris on tel: 0181-473 0531.

DISABLED LEVEL ACCESS shower unit with Dolphin shower and moveable chair. Excellent condition. £900 ono. Tel: (01484) 538515 or 542600 (Huddersfield).

CHILTERN SHOWER/TOILET CUBICLE for disabled person. 1 metre square. Excellent condition and design. Any reasonable offer considered. Also folding zimmer frame. £250. North Lakes area. Tel: (01768) 773618.

RENAULT VERSA TRAFIC van. M reg. Just had 6,000 miles service. Lightweight ramp. Non slip surface. Folds away neatly. Takes five full seats and one wheelchair or four full seats and two wheelchairs. White. £10,600. Tel: 0151-727 4233 (Liverpool).

LARK 4 MOBILITY SCOOTER. Very good condition. £1,000 ono. Tel (8am-5pm): (01270) 532228.

SUNRISE MEDICAL MIDI three-wheel electric scooter. Purchased Jan '96 and used only three times. Blue. £900. Delivery possible. Tel: (01684) 565542 (Malvern).

SEAT TERRA G REG. £2,150. 11,000 miles. Wheelchair access. Ramps and power winch. Garaged. MOT. Tel: (01372) 454298 (Surrey).

ACCESSIBLE FOR WHEELCHAIR driver or passenger. Dodge van. H reg '91. 30,000 miles. Electric ramp. Power steering. Many extras. Offers. £15,000. Tel: (01652) 657088 (Lincolnshire).

WHEELCHAIR 16in IMPERIAL self propelling. Chrome. Fold down back. Only used once. £350. Tel: 0181-947 0635 (London).

SHOPRIDER DELUXE SCOOTER. Nine months old. New. £1,800. Accept £1,200. Hardly used. Tel: (01322) 382409 (Kent).

FORD COURIER. WHEELCHAIR conversion. 1.3 litre petrol. Dec '95. Rear entry ramp. Electric winch. Coded radio. Driver's airbag. Security alarm. Power steering. Four seats plus wheelchair. Excellent condition. 6,800 miles. Little used. £10,250. Tel: (01843) 843734 (Kent).

QUICKIE LIGHTWEIGHT WHEELCHAIR. Very good condition. £500. Tel: (01291) 626718 (Chepstow).

FORD ESCORT CHAIRMAN 1991H. Wheelchair access via ramp. Low mileage. Garaged. Kept in very good condition. £5,995. Tel: 0181-207 1330.

12 STEPS STAIRLIFT. £350. Large 2ft 5in door caravan for wheelchair access. Twin axle. Very good condition. £3,500. Tel: (01507) 466278 (Lincs).

250KG HYDRAULIC CHAIRLIFT. £500 ono. Tel: 0181-660 6207/(0802) 423621 (Surrey).

VAUXHALL ASTRA MAX combo by Universal Mobility. J reg. 26,500 miles. Petrol. Automatic. Well maintained. Full service history. Reasonable offers. Ideal for electric chair. Tel: 0161-928 3476.

ELECTRIC LIFT and recline armchair. Excellent condition. Beige/dusky pink. £650. Tel: 0181-348 3639 (London).

BOOSTER TROPHY SCOOTER. 4-8mph. Very good condition. £1,000. Little used. Carmobility 90°-180° swivel seat. £400. Used in Montego. Tel: (01768) 773603.

FORD TRANSIT H REG. Under 10,000 miles. Side windows. Takes two wheelchairs. Rear ramp. Five other seats with seatbelts. Good condition. £6,000 ono. Tel: (01992) 622918 (Herts).

VOLKSWAGEN/SEAT SUNRISE (special car chair conversion). Three seats plus person in wheelchair. 12 months MOT. Regularly serviced. £2,250 ono. To view, tel: (01992) 524526 (Epping).

SUNRISE MOBILITY STERLING 4 elite scooter. Three years old. £1,200. Easy rise powered recliner chair with massage facility. Heather colour. Tel: (01483) 282768 (Guildford area).

MODIFIED VWCL 1,600 48,000 miles. One owner. Service history. Modified to suit lady with severe disability in both arms. Floor indicators. Modifications to handbrake. Knob on steering wheel. £2,750 ono. F reg. Tel: 0171-499 1287 (London).

Recruitment

adaip

alliance of disability advice
and information providers

COMMUNICATION WORKER

Salary SO1 £17,055 – 18,180

adaip is a broad alliance of local and national disability advice and information providers, created to support and encourage the development of disability advice and information services to meet the needs of disabled people.

You must have a good understanding of the issues facing disabled people and information providers. We are looking for someone with the range of skills and experience needed to help organise training events and conferences, produce a newsletter and help develop the role of adaip.

Preference will be given to applications from disabled people, and all disabled people who meet the essential criteria will be interviewed. We would welcome job share applications. The post will be based in accessible premises in Doncaster.

For pack and application form, contact:

Mark Hall, adaip, Park Lodge, St. Catherine's Hospital, Tickhill Road, Doncaster DN4 8QN.
Tel/Minicom (use voice announcer) 01302 310123
Fax 01302 310404

Information can also be supplied on tape or disk and in large print or braille if requested.

Closing date: 13 February 1997. Interviews: 3 March 1997.

DISABILITY DONCASTER RESOURCE CENTRE Community Link Worker

£16,500 per annum 37 hours per week

Disability Doncaster is a user led resource for disabled people offering a range of services. As part of our development we are seeking an enthusiastic and highly motivated Community Link Worker to join our team.

We are looking for someone who has an awareness of the issues affecting disabled people and a clear understanding of the social model of disability.

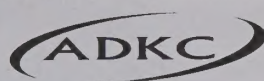
The post will provide an exciting opportunity to develop and support initiatives involving disabled people. A key role of the Community Link Worker will be to establish links between the centre and the community.

S/he will have experience of working to challenge disadvantage using community development methods, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

Further information is available from: Disability Doncaster Resource Centre, Heavens Walk, Doncaster DN4 5HZ. Tel: 01302 769219 (voice), 01302 329788 (minicom).

The closing date for applications is January 6th, 1997. Interviews will take place January 24th, 1997.

Disability Doncaster is an equal opportunities employer.



Action Disability

Kensington & Chelsea

We require an

Information Administration Officer

(part-time)

20 hours a week.

Scale 4 £14,085-£15,444 Pro Rata

ADKC is a voluntary organisation working to enhance the opportunities and quality of life of disabled people who live or work in Kensington and Chelsea.

This post will assist our Information Officer to deliver an efficient disability information service. He/she will also provide administrative support in the production of the ADKC newsletter and organisation of seminars.

Closing date for applications: 22 January 1997.

Interview date: 31 January 1997.

For job description and application form:

phone 0181 960 8888 or fax 0181 960 8282

ADKC Centre, Whitstable House,

Silchester Road

London W10 6SB

Tel: 0181 960 8888 Voice/Minicom Fax 0181 960 8282



THE GREATER MANCHESTER COALITION OF DISABLED

PEOPLE is recruiting for a

Disabled Person to Co-ordinate their Young Dis- abled Peoples Forum

NJC SO1, £17,055 - £18,180 – 35 hours per week

The aim of the Forum is to assist young disabled people in gaining more control over their lives. You will need: staff and project management skills, a detailed understanding of the politics of disability and knowledge of the main issues facing young disabled people. We are also looking for particular experience in developing and financing projects or activities in order to lead this project into the next stage of its development. Current funding ends 31st March 1998.

Please send for information, stating if braille or large print is required, to:

GmCDP, Carisbrooke, Wenlock Way, Gorton
Manchester M12 5LF.

Please do not telephone.

The closing date for applications for this post is 27th January '97.

Interviews w/b 3rd February '97.

Wanted

FORD ESCORT CHAIRMAN or similar type of vehicle to transport wheelchair passenger. Tel: 0181-953 1238.

APT ACTIVE PASSIVE TRAINER, rehab model. Good condition. Good price paid. Tel: 0181-520 6938.

NISSAN PRAIRIE/SERENA or similar converted for wheelchair passenger. Low

mileage preferred. Tel: (01435) 812147 (East Sussex).

Friend wanted

FRIEND WANTED a few hours at the week-end and periodically during school holidays to play with blind 11-year-old girl with cerebral palsy. References essential. Tel: 0181-853 0882 (SE London).

BERKSHIRE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: EQUALITY SERVICES

CO-ORDINATORS

FOR GENDER AND DISABILITY EQUALITY

Equality Services are looking to appoint two members of staff to join the newly formed equal opportunities unit, based at Shire Hall, Reading, specialising in the policy and monitoring aspects of gender and disability equality issues for the Education Department. One post will be responsible for gender and one for disability.

The postholders will join a high profile team whose brief will include publishing and disseminating the best practice in gender and disability equality, information gathering and analysis, initiating specialist projects, co-ordinating training and monitoring for the Education Department.

The postholders should be able to demonstrate the following:

- a theoretical understanding of gender or disability equality issues and a commitment to non-discriminatory practices
- experience of undertaking research, collating and analysing data and writing reports
- innovative ideas on how to implement equality programmes in the department
- the ability to communicate effectively with staff at all levels
- the ability to work under pressure to meet tight deadlines

The posts will be on APT & C conditions of service on PO 2 (£20,229 - £21,975) and successful candidates are required to start as soon as possible. The posts are both fixed term, until March 1998.

For further details, a copy of the job description and application form, please state which post you are interested in, by contacting:

Andrew Lee

Equality Services

Berkshire Education Department

Shire Hall, Shinfield Park

Reading RG2 5XE

Tel: 0118 9233588

Minicom Supertel: 0118 9753036

Closing date: 6 January 1997



Senior Apprenticeship for a Disabled Person leading to the position of

Media Education / Training Development Officer

This apprenticeship is being set up by Connections in conjunction with the Arts Council Apprenticeship Scheme. The apprenticeship runs for 18 months full-time with a wage of £16,000 p.a. This apprenticeship is aimed at disabled people of all ages who have some work experience (voluntary or paid) within television, arts or education and want to further his/her career in the development of media training. Subject to satisfactory progress, the apprentice will transfer to permanent employment at the end of the apprenticeship. The apprentice will be based at Connections where they will be trained in the key tasks of developing media training.

This post is open to disabled people only.

For further details and an application form, please send an A4 SAE to Jacqueline Davis, Connections, 241 King Street, London W6 9LP. Tel 0181 741 1766

Please state whether you require information in standard or large print, braille or audio cassette. The closing date for receipt of applications is 24th January 1997.

Connections aims to be an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from all sections of the community. All necessary access provision for a disabled person will be arranged.

Connections
Communications
entire limited

Residential care

A Residential Home in the Community

The Susan Loveday Trust, a registered charity, will shortly have two places available in a protected home for female adults with moderate learning difficulties, aged 22-32.

The home is situated in a pretty, traffic free square near Victoria Park, Hackney, East London.

For further information apply to the Chairperson at: 25 Vicars Close, Victoria Park, London E9 7HT

Property for sale

PETTSWOOD, KENT. Three bedroom semi. Mock Tudor style. Ensuite shower. Two loos. Bathroom. Utility room. Large garden. Price includes Stannah stairlift. Many extras. £169,000. Tel: (01689) 824536.

LINCS VILLAGE NEAR coast and Wolds. Spacious detached bungalow. Four beds, two bathrooms, one for disabled person, cloaks, three reception rooms, fitted breakfast kitchen, large utility, integral garage, excellent gardens. £125,000. Tel: (01507) 363681 (Louth).

EXTENDED THREE/FOUR bedroom semi. Central Southampton, gas central heating, upstairs bathroom, low level 18ft fitted kitchen, downstairs wheel-in shower/wc, 17ft through lounge, 40ft rear garden laid to lawn with raised shrub borders with patio area, shed with power lighting, outside tap (front and rear), off-road parking, very near to local amenities. £69,000. Tel: (01703) 315659.



Richard Attenborough Centre
for Disability and the Arts

PART-TIME MARKETING ASSISTANT/ RECEPTIONIST

The Centre, which is fully accessible, will provide an exciting new range of arts opportunities within a University context and will give priority to users with disabilities.

The successful candidate will work directly to Organising Tutors in producing effective publicity and advertising for courses, concerts, etc, and be responsible for setting up and updating databases for mailing lists. The position also includes some reception work, meeting members of the public and dealing with enquiries. A basic knowledge of marketing techniques, good word processing skills and a pleasant outgoing personality are required. Applications from people with disabilities are welcome. Selection will be based on merit.

Hours are up to 17.5 per week. Salary Grade 3 - £10,276 to £11,895 pa pro rata. This post is tenable for a fixed term of 18 months.

Applications in writing, including a CV and the names and addresses of two referees should be sent to: Dr E Hartley, Director, Richard Attenborough Centre for Disability and the Arts, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH by 3 January 1997.

Towards equal opportunities

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Disability NOW

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To subscribe, fill in this form and return it with a cheque (payable to Disability Now) to: DN, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ, or pay by credit card, tel: 0171-383 4575.

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DisabilityNow

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The award winning newspaper for everyone with an interest in disability

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Does the law suit?

Will Europe's first anti-discrimination law for disabled people really change your life? *See page 1.*

Mutual admiration: Terry Waite meets Leanne Oliver, nine, from Grantham, whose dancing skills made her runner-up in the Cystic Fibrosis Achievers' Awards creative and artistic endeavour section.



MICHAEL MELIA

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

Challenge MS with weight training



HOLIDAYS

DN's getaway guide: try something different



Jobs
pages 30-31

Regulars

News focus Shopmobility hits 150	9
Profile Scot's backbench bid	10
Investigation Care on the cheap	12
Comment What you think of DN	14
Parent's voice Lexy means business	25

